

Paradise in Antiquity

Jewish and Christian Views

EDITED BY
Markus Bockmuehl
and Guy G. Stroumsa



CAMBRIDGE

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The social and intellectual vitality of Judaism and Christianity in antiquity was in large part a function of their ability to articulate a viably transcendent hope for the human condition. Narratives of paradise – based on the concrete symbol of the Garden of Delights – came to play a central role for Jews, Christians, and eventually Muslims too.

These collected essays highlight the multiple hermeneutical perspectives on biblical paradise from Second Temple Judaism and Christian origins to the systematic expositions of Augustine and rabbinic literature, and show that while early Christian and Jewish sources draw on texts from the same Bible, their perceptions of paradise often reflect the highly different structures of the two sister religions. Dealing with a wide variety of texts, these essays explore major themes such as the allegorical and literal interpretations of paradise, the tension between heaven and earth, and paradise's physical location in space and time.

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Émile Perreau-Saussine
1972–2010
in paradisum deducant . . .
in civitatem sanctam Jerusalem

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CHAPTER I

Introduction: the paradise chronotrope

Guy G. Stroumsa

In an old *New Yorker* cartoon, two signs offer to send the newcomer to heaven in two opposite directions. One points to “paradise,” the other to “lectures on paradise.” To be sure, a collection of scholarly essays on ancient perceptions of paradise, such as this one, falls short of a promise to regain long lost paradise. And yet, from Dante’s *Paradiso* to Baudelaire’s *Les paradis artificiels*, powerful attempts have been made, time and again, to reclaim paradise through writing. The central human experience of paradise, it seems, is double: that of nostalgia for an irretrievable loss, and that of the unquenchable expectation for regaining it; what one could call the tension toward paradise, the *epektasis* of paradise. Indeed, paradise never disappeared from Western consciousness, and, despite *Entmythologisierung*, real or imagined, the concept retains in late modernity its force of attraction on earlier generations. “Work on Myth,” (*Arbeit am Mythos*, to use the apt title of the German philosopher Hans Blumenberg’s powerful study of Western culture): the history of paradise in Christian culture may be compared to a kaleidoscope, where images, symbols, mythologoumena and concepts play a major part, and can be rearranged in a series of formations, at once similar and different, but always stimulating.

The word “paradise,” as is well known, stems from Iran. The concept’s career in the cultures issued from the biblical traditions, however, starts with the first chapters of Genesis. Soon, in early Judaism, the paradise from Genesis “blows up,” as it were. Paradise moves back and forth along the axis of time: it can be conceived not only as belonging to the *Urzeit*, but also to the *Endzeit*, when it is reclaimed, or even to the present, in realized eschatology. Moreover, paradise is also mobile in space: it is not only located in different places upon earth (a pastime with a very long *Fortleben*), but also seems to circulate freely between earth and heaven. Paradise, then, can be nowhere and everywhere, and can be reached either never – the asymptotic Messianic times, or at any time – the “paradise now!” of the Gnostics. This fundamental polyvalence of paradise, for

which I propose to borrow the term *chronotrope* from Bakhtinian poetics, is the essential element of the story of paradise and its transformations not only in Judaism and Christianity, but also in Islam. Although the latter does not share the sacred text of Judaism and Christianity, the conceptions of paradise in the Qur'an and in early Islam reflect the same world of reference as the biblical heritage. "Mapping Paradise," to follow the title of Alessandro Scafi's beautiful book, is not only a matter of latitude and longitude; indeed, it is on the map of European culture and sensitivities that paradise must be drawn.

The social and intellectual vitality of Judaism and Christianity in late antiquity was in large part a function of their ability to articulate a viably transcendent hope for the human condition, the redemptive expectation of a world at once restored and new. Often, as perhaps again today, such hopes came to the fore at times of cultural and religious crisis or transition. Without reducing or trivializing concrete teleologies, they concerned the time, and often the place, in which God's final and original purposes would be at one, and human flourishing and aspiration realized. In late antiquity Jews and Christians, and eventually Muslims too, tended to find the narrative of hope wrapped up in the narrative of origins, and above all in the very concrete symbol of the Garden of Delights in the book of Genesis: paradise.

The present volume fits well into a newly vibrant field of interest in ancient eschatology that has produced several recent volumes on paradise with interesting synergies and analogies.¹ Its fifteen chapters offer a series of richly diverse glimpses into the religious world of late antiquity, with a particular focus on Jewish and Christian views of paradise. They study, from different perspectives, the luxuriant transformations of paradise in early Judaism and Christianity, from the Hellenistic times to the end of late antiquity. While early Christian and Jewish sources draw on texts from the same Bible, their perceptions of paradise, although seemingly similar, often reflect the highly different structures of the two sister religions. The collection of these essays highlights the multiple hermeneutical perspectives on the biblical paradise among Jews and Christians, as well as the ongoing dialogue between them, often acrimonious, sometimes unacknowledged, but ever present. At the same time, this volume also reflects the major inward turn of religious attitudes in late antiquity, which left a clear impact on conceptions of paradise.

¹ See e.g. Ashton and Whyte 2001; Delumeau 1995; Kabir 2001; Luttikhuisen 1999; Miller 1996; Psaki and Hindley 2002; Riedweg and Schmid 2008; Scafi 2006; Tabor 1986.

The early ideas of paradise inherited from the Persians soon started to develop in ancient Jewish literature. In Hellenistic times, a series of Jewish texts from Palestine already reflected attempts at “remythologizing” the story of the *hexahemeron* and human origins. Toward the end of that period, the writings of Philo of Alexandria bear witness to the opposite attitude: allegorical hermeneutics of the Genesis text. That does not mean, of course, that Philo forgets all traditional, concrete conceptions of paradise, with the attempts to locate paradise on earth, or to visit it in heaven. The different conceptions of paradise play a complex game, reflecting and echoing one another.

Comparing means, first of all, emphasizing differences. While the reflection of Christian thinkers on the origins of humankind started, like that of their Jewish counterparts, from the biblical text, it is obvious that Jews and Christians were to highlight different elements in these chapters. Moreover, the Christian conception of Jesus Christ as summing up human history since Adam and offering a radical change from the consequences of Adam’s fateful sin, never had a real equivalent among the Rabbis. Hence, realized eschatology, and perceptions of paradise as internalized, always remained more clearly present among the Church Fathers than among the Rabbis. For both Christians and Jews, history was *Heilsgeschichte*, and what would happen at the end of times had much to do with what had happened back then, *in illo tempore*. “Back then” (*illud tempus*) was also “back there” (*ille locus*), and throughout Christian history, discussions of paradise would to a great extent deal not only with its nature, but also with its location on earth; *eutopia*, as it were, rather than utopia.

Both the Christian and the Jewish thinkers of the first centuries, the Fathers of the Church and the Rabbis of the Talmud, however, were struggling to develop and establish some kind of orthodoxy which would underline and reinforce the ecclesial structures they were building.² This drive toward orthodoxy, which also entailed censorship and intellectual control, goes a long way to explain why they regarded with some suspicion those first chapters of Genesis, which had served as the basis for drastic attempts at remythologizing (and sectarianism), both in Jewish apocryphal and in Gnostic literature. In some ways, then, both Rabbis and Fathers sought to play down the mythological elements involved with the paradise story and neutralize them, preferring to put the major emphasis on other figures and events of the early history of humankind.

² The following paragraphs follow Stroumsa 2005.

In the biblical text, the Lord God had expelled Adam from Eden, the “garden of delight” (*ek tou paradeisou tès truphès*), establishing him in front of that garden, now protected by the Cherubs and the fiery sword (Gen. 3.23–24). One can argue that the rabbinic and early Christian understanding of Adam’s exile from paradise both reflect the new conceptions of time and of the person taking shape in late antiquity.

In the first centuries of the Christian era, a number of religious groups offered competing versions of accounts on the same themes. These groups included, at least, the Rabbis, dualists of various shades, such as the Hermetic author of the *Poimandres*, the different Gnostic thinkers and sects, and the Manicheans. Already, Jewish literature from the Second Temple period had reflected at length on the old myths preserved in the first chapters of Genesis. This literature came both from Palestine (mainly the disparate corpus known as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, which had offered a radical remythologization of the elliptic first chapters of Genesis), and from the Diaspora. From the long tradition of Hellenistic Jewish literature, on the other hand, we are mainly left with Philo, who offered an essentially Platonist hermeneutics. To oversimplify a highly complex story, one can say that the Gnostics and the Manicheans followed the path opened by Apocryphal literature, while the Church Fathers followed in Philo’s footsteps.³

The book of Genesis retains various myths pertaining to our topic, from the *hexahemeron* to Cain’s murder of Abel, the tower of Babel, and the Flood. At each point, humanity takes a new start, as it were, and civilization is defined anew. In order to comprehend properly the early Christian understanding of human origins, one should in principle analyze the complete perspective offered by the patristic perception of these myths. This is certainly a study worth undertaking, and which, to the best of my knowledge, is still to be written. Here, however, I shall only focus upon the first stage in this progressive formation of human societies, as reflected in Adam’s sin and the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise. This expulsion signifies the very beginning of life on earth as we still know it, i.e. a life of toil, suffering, violence, and death.

In the Greco-Roman literary tradition, there was no single authoritative text which offered one formal, binding myth on the Golden Age and the origins of mankind. This fact highlights the great divide between the

³ On Apocryphal literature as the immediate background from which Gnostic mythology was born, see for instance Stroumsa 1984. On Philo and patristic thought, see for instance Wolfson 1947.

mainstream of Greco-Roman culture and the biblical tradition. Although the status of Homer (and also, to a certain extent, that of Hesiod) remained foundational in Greek culture through the centuries, the Homeric epics and Hesiod's works never achieved the kind of canonicity pertaining to a single, divine, revealed text. Hence, the various myths of origins and of the Golden Age in the *Urzeit*, or various references to a "paradise" of sorts did not have in the Greek tradition the power equivalent to that of the first chapters of Genesis in Judaism and in Christianity. We know of some traditions of mythical places: Homer refers to the Elysian Fields (*Odyssey* iv) and to the Island of the Phaeacians and the closed garden of Alkinoos (*Odyssey* vii). The Fortunate Islands are mentioned in Pindar's *Second Olympic*, while Diodorus of Sicily alludes to a voyage to a southern Island from Ethiopia. In a sense, Plato's references to Atlantis in *Timaeus* and *Critias* would reverberate in similar ways in ancient literature. But parallel to those, there are also traditions about a paradisiac period at the dawn of time: so Hesiod refers to the Golden Age in the ancient past, while Plato speaks in the *Politicus* about the happy period under the rule of Chronos.

It is not to a golden age at the dawn of history that the Greek perceptions of the Fortunate Islands referred, but rather to a blissful state of affairs happy and free of worries, perhaps not common, but to be found upon earth. Such perceptions were certainly rather common in the Greco-Roman world, and must have influenced the Christian perceptions of paradise. Such perceptions would now emphasize the blissful state to be achieved by the Christian believers, or rather the place in which they would live blissfully after death.

The earliest Christians read the Bible in Greek, and their theology emerged and grew within the Greco-Roman cultural milieu. Hence, it comes as no surprise if such Greek representations of the Golden Age or of the Fortunate Islands or the Elysian Fields would soon be perceived as parallels to the Christian conceptions of paradise. Thus, although the Greek conceptions of time and history are fundamentally different from those developed by the Church Fathers, one can observe a certain amalgam of traditions, which eventually became a fixture of collective imagination. In his *De Paradiso*, for instance, Ambrosius offers a synthesis of the old myth of the Golden Age and Philo's spiritual interpretation of the Genesis story. One can speak of the Christianization of some Greco-Roman myths, and of philosophical reflections on the Golden Age.⁴

⁴ See in particular Delumeau 1992, 11–25.

There existed in Christian antiquity various attempts to locate paradise, usually in the East, as implied by Genesis 2.8.⁵ These attempts would survive as late as the seventh century, when Isidore of Seville, in his *Etymologies*, still felt the need to argue that the Fortunate Islands, known today as the Canaries, were not identical with the Garden of Eden.⁶ Incidentally, the attempts to locate paradise continued until the modern times. Thus, various authors, in the seventeenth century, look for paradise in various parts of the earth in their ethnological and geographical *curiositas* and their search for societies governed by the law of nature.⁷

From Ezekiel 28.13ff. ("You were in Eden, the garden of God ... You were on the holy mountain of God ..."), paradise could easily be construed as a mountain. It was often conceived to be a holy mountain, in particular in the oriental tradition, still reflected in the name of the monastic "Republic" on Mount Athos, *Hagion Horos*. On this holy mountain, a perfect cult, holding soteriological power, is celebrated. Thus, for instance, in the Syriac *Cave of Treasures*, as Serge Ruzer has convincingly argued.⁸

Some Christian intellectuals, however, found in the biblical story of Adam and Eve support for a reflection upon primitive life, as it had been analyzed by some trends in the philosophical tradition. For the Greeks, it was precisely to want, or deficiency, *chreia*, that humanity owed its progress at the end of the Golden Age. As Marguerite Harl has shown, for some of the Church Fathers, the parallel moment in the biblical story was Adam's discovery of his own nudity. To be sure, a majority of the Church Fathers fostered what she calls a "pessimistic" outlook, and saw in human work a punishment for the original sin, an *ascholia* which represented an obstacle to the contemplation of spiritual realities. Some, however, and in particular Origen, supported an "optimistic" understanding of the first chapters of Genesis, and considered as a gift to man his need to set his intelligence to work, arguing that this work prepared him to approach God. Man's deficiency encouraged him to invent the sciences, and these are a preparation of sorts for the way to God.⁹

The strong "pessimistic" perception of Adam and of his "primordial" sin in early Christian theology is too well known, too predominant, to require analysis here. For the Church Fathers, who were elaborating upon

⁵ Hence the *qibla* toward the East in early Christian prayers. See Dölger 1925, 220–42.

⁶ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, who discusses the question whether paradise is a place or not. See also Ps-Basilus, *Homily*, PG 30, 63–66.

⁷ See Alexandre 1988.

⁸ Ruzer 2001 and Delumeau 1992, 27, for whom most writers, in the East as well as in the West, sustain such views and reject a symbolical reading of the Genesis text.

⁹ Harl 1993.

Paul's thought, Adam's sin had brought death upon all mankind, and it is only through Christ, the last Adam, and his own sacrifice that the consequences of this curse would be erased. In a sense, then, the first chapters of Genesis were not only perceived as a myth of the *Urzeit*, but given a metaphorical interpretation which emphasized their significance for human nature in general, not only regarding the protoplasts' deeds and fate. In the Christian interpretation, then, the myth of the *Urzeit* was implicitly transformed, to a great extent, into a myth about human nature. If all men had been implicated in Adam's sin, all could be saved by the coming of the second Adam. Adam's fault, in short, was not an unmitigated tragedy. Indeed it would be called by Augustine (who did not propound an exactly optimistic and light vision of history and of human nature) a *felix culpa*. Through his sin, Adam had unwittingly permitted the future coming of the Savior. His expulsion from paradise should thus be perceived as only a temporary, rather than a permanent, feature of human life. Paradise, then, is not lost forever: it can indeed be reclaimed, not only in the eschatological time, but also *hic et nunc*. This amounted to nothing less than a dramatic transformation of the meaning of the biblical myth of the *Urzeit*.

Notwithstanding their diversity, Greek ideas about time have often been perceived as essentially cyclical in nature, and hence diametrically opposed to the Jewish and Christian linear conceptions of time, which are predicated upon the creation of the universe and the expectation of the end of the world.¹⁰ Such a perception of things, according to which Judeo-Christian thought, but not Greek thought, would be fundamentally endowed with a real historical dimension, is of course too simplistic to be heuristically useful. The hermeneutics of Adam's expulsion from paradise reflect the complex, ambivalent attitude of the early Christian thinkers to the *Urzeit*.

It is mainly through Jewish lenses that the early Christian thinkers learned to reflect about human origins. But they adapted these lenses to the new requirements of their own self-perception and mythology. It is thus only to a certain extent that the Rabbis and the Fathers can be said to reflect on the same text, although both offered an exegesis of Genesis. For the Jews, the beginnings of mankind were the prelude to the birth of Israel and the development of *Heilsgeschichte*, ending in eschatological messianism. When reflecting on origins, the Jews were inclined to stress the historical roots of their own peoplehood. It is within this frame that eschatology

¹⁰ The classic comparative study is Boman 1960. See also Puech 1978, 1.1–24 and 215–70; and Stroumsa 1992b, 85–98.

and soteriology, i.e. messianism, found their meaning. Important as it was, the story of Adam and Eve in paradise, as echoed in *Genesis Rabbah*, for instance, seems to have been less significant for the Rabbis than Israel's exodus from Egypt and its Sinaitic sequel.

Christian intellectuals, on the other hand, perceived themselves to be *verus Israel*, the true Israel. Yet, their conception of peoplehood was deeply different from that of the Jews: they were, in the language of the *Epistle of Diognetus* in the second century, and in that of Aphrahat in the fourth, "a nation from among the nations." Moreover, for the Christians, the story of Adam and Eve provided the justification for the coming of Jesus Christ, and was to be understood in the light of His saving mission. Since Paul, who had announced that death, brought in by Adam, had been vanquished by Christ (Roms 5.12), Christian soteriology had insisted on the direct line from the first to the last Adam. Such a perception obviously trivialized the place of Israel in the history of salvation.

This fundamental difference between the Jewish and the Christian approach to the myth of paradise is reflected in the dual structure of the Christian Scriptures, and in the very specific intertextuality that they demand. The Old and the New Testament are to be interpreted in the light of one another. As *sacramenta futuri*, the tales and figures of the Old Testament are not to be understood in and by themselves, but should rather be seen as alluding, in veiled form, to the perfect, final expression of divine revelation in the figure of Jesus Christ.¹¹ Quite clearly, then, such a conception entails a certain blurring of the historical dimension of these tales and figures. This blurring is perhaps nowhere as striking as in the interpretation of Adam's *felix culpa*.

In the New Testament and in the earliest Christian writings, the story of Adam and Eve in paradise plays a very minor role, and this role seems to reflect its place in contemporary Jewish literature.¹² One should insist upon the fact that for Jesus and his disciples, the story of the Garden of Eden is not very significant.¹³ For both Jews and Christians, reflection on the *Urzeit* was focused upon the story of creation itself, the *hexahemeron*, since

¹¹ For an example of how this conception is reflected in patristic biblical hermeneutics, see Stroumsa 1992a.

¹² For some iconographic references, see Schubert and Schubert 1975. The authors show that the iconography reflects the reading of the Targum of Gen. 3.24, which points to an eschatological understanding of paradise.

¹³ See for instance Luke 23.43, where Jesus tells the good thief that he will soon be with him in paradise; see Luke 16.19–31 on the rich man and the poor Lazarus. See Galling 1949; Jeremias 1954. See further Bietenhard 1951, 161–91. Paul's mystical ascent to the third heaven (1 Cors 12) was also interpreted as a vision of paradise. See de Vuippens 1925.

in the Greco-Roman world, *creatio ex nihilo* was the most dramatic claim to originality of the biblical *Weltanschauung*. But *Gan Eden* and *paradeisos* had also begun to acquire in Jewish and in Christian writings a new, metaphorical meaning, referring to the place of the Just at the *Endzeit*. In a sense, one can say that for both Christians and Jews, the coming kingdom of God in the millennium would be the new paradise.

For the Christians, however, the power of the paradise story was affected by another aspect of their soteriology. The centrality of Jesus Christ for the new religion weakened the weight of eschatology, since the central messianic expectation had already been fulfilled. This “realized eschatology,” to use theological jargon, permitted the progressive disengagement from the eschatological expectation of the Second Coming, from the second to the fourth century. The Christians would then, more and more, think of paradise in terms of the Kingdom of God – and Ephrem, for instance, would identify both concepts. “Paradise” soon became associated with the blissful state of the elect, which would eventually be graphically reconstituted in the monastic cloister: already for Jerome, the monastery was identified with a paradise.¹⁴ Among the early Christian thinkers, then, one can distinguish two main trends. For some Fathers, such as Epiphanius, Chrysostom, or Lactantius, who, as says Augustine (*De Gen. ad Lit.* 8.1–2, 5), read the *Genesis* text *corporaliter*, paradise is a concrete place upon the earth. For others, on the other hand, who read it *spiritualiter* (mainly Origen) it is a state of bliss. In both cases, however, paradise is certainly not confined to the *Urzeit*. A third trend, stemming from Philo, and to which Augustine himself belongs, together with Theophilus of Antioch and Ambrosius, thinks that paradise should be understood *utroque modo*.¹⁵

The Christian demythologization of paradise grew from a complex background. Its most obvious origin is probably directly related to the transformation, or rather the realization, of the Jewish concept of Messiah. Jesus Christ had offered salvation, and yet history was far from having ended. Hence, the Jewish linear vision of history was profoundly modified. If there was no clear end to *Heilsgeschichte*, its beginning in time, too, would be blurred. The one real focal point of world history was neither its beginning nor its end, but rather its middle, the coming of Jesus Christ upon the earth, His life, death and resurrection, which must be perceived by the Christian believer as constantly occurring in the present.

¹⁴ Jerome, *Epistle* 125, 7ff. Reference in Louth 1995; see also bibliography there. See further Sagne 1984.

¹⁵ See Miquel 1984.

From such a perspective, as we have seen, Adam was the first *sacramentum salutis*, or *figura* of Christ, in the biblical text – although his sin and punishment only highlighted the discrepancy between him and the recapitulation of history in Jesus Christ: sin, punishment, and salvation. The early Christian traditions about Adam's skull lying at the foot of the cross on Golgotha reflect precisely this direct link between Adam and the Son of Man, the last Adam.¹⁶ One can perhaps say, then, that the Christians overcame Adam through his last avatar, from above, as it were.

The Jews, on their part, seem to have harbored a rather similar ambivalence in their feelings toward the figure of Adam. Yet, it is before Adam (or from below) that they discover another mythological figure, the Primordial Adam, or *Adam Kadmon*, later to become a protagonist in Kabbalistic literature. *Adam Kadmon*, however, remains a rather weak figure in mid-rashic literature. In *Genesis Rabbah*, for instance, he never achieves a really prominent status.

It is only with the Gnostic trends as reflected in texts dating from the second or third centuries, and later on in Manichaean traditions, that one finds a consistent remythologization of the protoplasts' story in paradise. This complex and baroque myth-making lies beyond the scope of this paper, but I wish at least to quote from one of the most powerful texts, the so-called *Hypostasis of the Archons* found at Nag Hammadi:

From that day, the Snake came to be under the curse of the Authorities, until the All-powerful Man was to come, that curse fell upon the Snake.

They turned to their Adam and took him and expelled him from the Garden (*paradeisos*) along with his wife, for they have no blessing, since they too are beneath the curse.

Moreover, they threw Mankind into great distraction (*perispasmos*) and into a life of toil, so that their Mankind may be occupied by worldly affairs, and might not have the opportunity (*scholazein*) of being devoted to the Holy Spirit.¹⁷

In their dramatic struggle against the Gnostic radical remythologization of cosmogony and anthropogony, second-century Christian theologians were bound to put less emphasis than their competitors on the interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis. The best strategy against Gnostic myth-making was to avoid discussing the same issues at great length, and to move the focus elsewhere.¹⁸ Similar attitudes would be reflected in the

¹⁶ On Christ as the last Adam, see Daniélou 1950, 3–44. The most dramatic classic iconographic treatment is perhaps Piero della Francesca's fresco about Adam's death in Assisi.

¹⁷ CG II, 91; I quote according to the translation of Layton 1974. See his commentary, Layton 1976, esp. 59–60 nn. 79–80, which does not add much for our perspective.

¹⁸ This method was applied in a much more radical way by the Rabbis, who knew to kill their opponents by silence – whereas the patristic heresiographers expounded the heretics' views at great length before refuting them.

anti-Manichaean polemics of the third and fourth century. More precisely, the patristic heresiologists would consistently choose to focus the debate upon ethics rather than upon metaphysics in their interpretation of the paradise story.¹⁹

It is Philo's interpretation of the expulsion from paradise which lies at the bottom of the Origenian understanding. For Philo, the story of Adam and Eve teaches us on human nature, and their sin and punishment does not stain the beginning of history. Cain's crime, rather, seems to be the primordial disaster of the human race.²⁰ Philo points out that while God "establishes" Adam in front of paradise after his expulsion (Gen. 3.24: *katôikisen auton apenanti tou paradeisou tès truphès*), the biblical text speaks of Cain as "inhabiting" (Gen. 4.16: *kai ôikèsen en gèi Naid katenanti Edem*). For Philo, this difference highlights the fact that Adam was expelled, while it was voluntarily that Cain left his previous home (*Post.* 10).

For Origen, in the mid third century, the biblical story of paradise reflected a *musterion* much more interesting than Plato's myths (*Contra Celsum* 4.40). For the early Christian thinkers, the status of the first chapters of *Genesis* was, as already argued above, somewhat similar to that of myths in the Greek world. In Alexandria at the turn of the third century, Origen, educated in a Middle Platonist milieu, follows in Philo's footsteps and applies to the Bible the allegorical methods of interpretation which had been applied for many centuries by Greek grammarians and philosophers on the Homeric texts. For Origen, the expulsion from paradise was more a reference to the history of the soul than to that of humanity.

It is in that sense, mainly, that Origen compares the first chapters of *Genesis* to Plato's myth of the fall of the soul (*Phaidros*, 246 b-c). For him, the Bible (a philosophy called "barbarian" as it was written in Hebrew), offered under the popular garb of its stories a teaching of metaphysical truths even deeper than that proposed by the Greek philosophers of the Homeric texts. In that sense, the story of paradise, when interpreted correctly, offered an understanding of the soul and of its fall which went beyond anything Plato had proposed. At least here, then, Origen's position seems to deny any real "historical" significance to the paradise story. For him, for instance, the Hebrew word Eden simply means sweet (*hèdus*).²¹ We do not know much more on Origen's view of Adam's expulsion from paradise, as he actually says very little on the subject. In particular, one should moreover mention the puzzling fact that paradise is totally absent

¹⁹ See Ladner 1967, 63–82, 152–62. Cf. Williams 1962. ²⁰ See Ruzer 2001.

²¹ *Selecta in Gen.*, P.G. 12, 1000 a.

from his *Homilies on Genesis*.²² In any case, the proper understanding of paradise played a significant role in the Origenist controversy, as reflected by Epiphanius and Jerome.²³

The outline of the book falls into two parts:

1. The paradises of Second Temple Judaism and Christian origins
2. Contemporized traditions of paradise: Jews and Christians in late antiquity

Part I concerns itself with the Jewish and Christian Bible as well as its reception history during the period of normative self-definition. Joachim Schaper identifies the messianic dimension of hopes for paradise in the oldest, i.e. inner-biblical and versional, reception of the traditions of Genesis 2–3. Other studies in this section explore that reception history in the exegetically attentive yet allegorizing textual scholarship of Philo of Alexandria (Maren R. Niehoff) and in the expanded treatment in the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo (Richard Bauckham). Martin Goodman asks a poignant and surprisingly related question by drawing attention to the distinctive Jewish view of first-century pleasure gardens or *paradeisoi* as reflected in writers like Philo or Josephus, who stress the completely plant-free Temple and appear not to share the contemporary Greco-Roman enthusiasm for gardens. The formative texts of the period of Christian origins are also an integral part of the reception history of Genesis 2–3, and familiar themes therefore recur here. Grant Macaskill surveys the New Testament which, despite its seemingly slender explicit evidence for paradise, inevitably exercises enormous influence and fascination on subsequent Christian reflection – especially as the motif is transformed in the Book of Revelation. Simon Gathercole concludes Part I with a study of the theme of paradise in second- and third-century evidence that came to be viewed as heterodox and “Gnostic,” noting in it a greatly enhanced interest in the *journey* to paradise as distinct from the destination itself.

Part II traces the question forward from the biblical period to the various ways in which the tradition was interpreted and reappropriated in the period of late antiquity. Following on from Simon Gathercole’s chapter, we study Tertullian’s linkage of paradise with his affirmation of a general and primordial divine law (Sabrina Inowlocki). Yonatan Moss studies the

²² See Doutreleau 1985. See in particular the first homily, on Creation (pp. 24–74).

²³ Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 58.6–8, GCS 1.68–69; *Panarion* 64.42, GCS 2.472–73; Jerome, *Letter to John of Jerusalem*, Ep. 51, 5 (ed. Labourt 1949, 2.163–66).

problem of biblical interpretation in a multilingual society, through the question of the language of creation (Hebrew or Syriac) in Syriac theological literature. Through a thorough analysis of some themes related to paradise in rabbinic literature, Menahem Kister highlights the dialectical relationship between the thought of the Rabbis and that of the Church Fathers. In addition to being the object of future aspiration, however, the desire for paradise may for the Rabbis at the same time take the form of nostalgia for a lost innocence, including sexual innocence (Galit Hasan-Rokem).

On the Christian side, Augustine of Hippo is a towering interpreter of, among other things, the concreteness of these received biblical hopes for paradise. Here this scriptural *aggiornamento* is examined, first, from the perspective of his engagement in the classical tradition exemplified above all in Virgil (Gillian Clark), and then from the perspective of its seminal contribution to the history of political philosophy (Emile Perreau-Saussine). Markus Bockmuehl's concluding chapter examines the surprising persistence, among hermeneutically diverse Jewish and Christian writers, of a conviction that the past and future earthly paradise remains for all its spiritual significance a geographically specific place that must be somehow contiguous with the mappable world in which we live.

These chapters deal with highly different texts, through a long period. It is therefore all the more significant that on various points, they seem to echo one another. Gardens, from Mesopotamia to Rome, are dealt with by both Schaper and Goodman. Bauckham, Perreau-Saussine, and Bockmuehl treat the tension between heaven and earth, while that between allegory and the literal sense is dealt with by Niehoff and Bockmuehl. Bauckham and Gathercole take us to tours of heaven, while Clark, Niehoff, Hasan-Rokem, Perreau-Saussine, and Bockmuehl address the question of body and soul. It is not only the physical locus of paradise that comes back time and again, but also that of its location in time. The question whether paradise belongs to the past, the present or the future recurs in more than half of the chapters. To be sure, the similarities and differences in approaching paradise among Jews and Christians provide the major thread through the book, but the relationship between pagans and Jews, pagans and Christians, and even Christians and Muslims, is also treated in a number of contributions to the volume. The epilogue by Alessandro Scafi offers concluding reflections on the significance of this symposium for the history of paradise. This book finds its origins in a bi-national British-Israeli conference organized on March 3–31, 2008, at the Center for the Study of Christianity of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Leading scholars from

both countries took part in the conference, and presented papers ranging from Second Temple Judaism through an important period of Jewish and Christian self-definition to the great systematic expositions of Augustine and rabbinic literature. The editors wish to express their gratitude to John Levy and the British Academic Study Group, without whose help the conference could not have been organized. We are also most grateful to David Satran and other colleagues at the Hebrew University for excellent organizational support and hospitality, and to Aline Guillermet and to Sarah Price for their attentive professionalism in seeing this volume through the publication process. The editors would like to express their thanks to James Austin Taylor Lancaster, who prepared the indices. Abbreviations follow common scholarly practice in Biblical Studies.

Our task of producing this volume suffered two hard blows at the very last minute, when little could be done to alter the outcome; and we beg our readers' indulgence for resulting editorial shortcomings or unevennesses. First, due to a life-threatening illness Alessandro Scafi's Epilogue was delayed until the last possible moment for inclusion. More sadly still, just as the final page proofs were being collated, we received news of the sudden death of Emile Perreau-Saussine, a good colleague and friend to many of the contributors. Emile tragically leaves behind a young family, not to mention a promising career in political philosophy. It is therefore to his memory that this volume is dedicated.

PART I

*Paradises of Second Temple Judaism and
Christian origins*

CHAPTER 2

The messiah in the garden: John 19.38–41, (royal) gardens, and messianic concepts

Joachim Schaper

The ancient Near East and its literatures are full of gardens, real ones and symbolic ones. So is the Hebrew Bible. As has been recently pointed out, “it is conspicuous that gardens as symbols should receive so little attention among biblical scholars” – and as Stordalen says in his book on Genesis 2–3, which goes a long way towards redressing that deficit, “[t]he main part of modern critical scholarship on Genesis 2–3 does not comment upon the term גן or the presumed biblical Hebrew concept ‘garden/park.’” Stordalen goes on to state, in my opinion quite rightly:

This silence was perhaps generated in order to avoid pre-critical exuberance on the “paradise” topic. Pre-critical interpretation of the garden in Genesis 2–3 was indebted to the LXX translation παράδεισος for גן in Gen. 2.8 (and in other instances). In Christian interpretation, the Vulgate rendition *paradisum*, along with conventional apprehensions of Paradise read into Genesis 2, was further indebted to notions of Paradise in Apocrypha, pseudepigraphic literature, and New Testament literature. This entire portfolio was traditionally read into Genesis 2–3 precisely through the word גן. Historical philology discovered that the word פֶּרֶדֶס was originally Persian, occurring only as a late and infrequent loan word in biblical Hebrew (as in Akkadian and other Semitic languages). So the reading παράδεισος in LXX (and Vulgate) was deemed irrelevant to historical interpretation of Genesis 2.¹

Yes, indeed. But by the same token, the use of the term παράδεισος in the LXX will prove very helpful in researching the concept of gardens and their symbolic significance in Jewish Hellenistic literature and in the New Testament. In any case, “gardens do carry,” as Stordalen aptly points out, “symbolic significance quite independently of that alleged Persian influence.”² And he adds that, “[c]onsequently, there should be every

I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in the hugely enjoyable conference at which this paper was presented. My thanks go to the organizers and to the colleagues who contributed to the discussion of the present paper, especially to G. Stroumsa and M. Bockmuehl and to R. S. Evyasaf, Y. Zakovitch, R. Bauckham, S. Gathercole, and A. Kubis.

¹ Stordalen 2000, 84; also see Stordalen 2008. ² Stordalen 2000, 85.

reason for exploring the symbolic significance of a garden to a biblical Hebrew audience”³ – and, I would like to add, to Hellenistic Jewish and early Christian audiences.

I certainly do not intend to become pre-critically exuberant “on the ‘paradise’ topic.” However, I shall say quite a lot about gardens, and, indeed, about kings – including the Messiah. Why? Because there are plenty of mentions of gardens in the Hebrew Bible, including many which see gardens as being of special importance to kings, just like in numerous texts and images from other ancient Near Eastern cultures. Indeed, kings are often depicted as gardeners, because of the special significance gardens have in what one might call the Near Eastern symbolic system. Although, as has rightly been said, evidence of the concept of the king as gardener in the Hebrew Bible is inconclusive (but cf. 2 Sam. 21.14 and Ps. 72.16),⁴ it is nevertheless very likely that the image of the king as gardener played a similar role in Israel. This is supported by the fact that a king’s garden is mentioned on numerous occasions in the Bible, of which more later.

The connection between gardens and kings is less obvious in the Hebrew Bible than it is in Mesopotamian literature, but it is nevertheless present. It is therefore surprising that even Stordalen, in his fine monograph, does not pay much attention to that connection. However, it is there, and, once one has begun to realise just how important it is in the Bible, it becomes more and more palpable. The exegete’s eyes are opened to the hidden and not so hidden meanings of a number of biblical texts. Genesis 2–3 is an interesting example. It may not be the first thing that comes to mind when reading that narrative, but it is not far beneath the surface, and it has been pointed out by a number of scholars that Adam’s function in the garden parallels that of Near Eastern monarchs in relation to their palace gardens.

It is this kind of observation that should alert one to the significance of royal traits in the way the Hebrew Bible and Hellenistic Jewish literature depict humans in the context of garden settings. When the Septuagint does that, it most often uses the term *παράδεισος*. It is actually used all over the place; the mentions in the LXX are too numerous to list them here. It is especially noteworthy that the Septuagint translators chose to render the Hebrew term *גן*, in Genesis 2–3, *exclusively* as *παράδεισος*. In other Septuagint passages, too, the term *παράδεισος* is *normally*, but not *exclusively*, used to refer to Hebrew *גן*, “garden,” “park.”

³ Stordalen 2000, 85.

⁴ Thus, correctly, Stordalen 2000, 102. But see Widengren 1951.

This usage of παράδεισος is due to the strong influence of Achaemenid culture on pre-Hellenistic Judah and the literature it produced. As is well known, the Median term **paridaeza* and its Persian cognate **paridaida* spawned the Hebrew equivalent פֶּרֶדֶס and the Greek equivalent παράδεισος. As Jan Bremmer points out in his article on “Paradise: From Persia, via Greece, into the Septuagint,” the term **paridaeza* is of Median – not of Persian! – origin:

The occurrence of such a Median term as loanword in Greek and ... Akkadian, Hebrew and Aramaic, is one more testimony to the influence of the enigmatic Medians. The tribe itself has left very little traces and its early history is hard to reconstruct, but the fact that the Greeks called their formidable Eastern opponents first Medes and only later Persians, attests to their former importance; similarly, the Jews speak of Medes in *Isaiah* (13.17, 21.2) and *Jeremiah* (51.2, 28), but of Medes and Persians only in the post-exilic books of *Ezra*, *Nehemiah*, *Esther* and *Daniel*.⁵

The term **paridaeza* entered Hebrew as פֶּרֶדֶס and Greek as παράδεισος. Unfortunately it is virtually impossible to arrive at certain conclusions regarding the usage and meaning of the term in Median since, as Bremmer points out, being faced “with the absence of early Iranian material we will have to take recourse to its use as loanword in more or less contemporary Akkadian and Elamite texts in order to reconstruct its meaning in the oldest period of the Persian, multicultural empire.”⁶ Indeed, neither the Median nor the Old Persian form of the term is documented in the extant Old Persian material.⁷

Exploration of the occurrences of *pardesu* and *partetas* in the relevant material in Akkadian and Elamite texts respectively – as far as Elamitic is concerned, especially the Persepolis Treasury Tablets (PTT) and the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (PFT) – leads to the conclusion that Old Persian **paridaida* “was,” as Bremmer puts it, “adopted in the Elamite *Kanzleisprache*,”⁸ i.e. in the language of the state administration, whereas Median **paridaeza* was adopted into Akkadian, Hebrew, and Greek.⁹ The main point is that the early Iranian term(s) could refer to “a storage-place, vineyard, orchard, stable, forest or nursery of trees. Evidently, it was a kind of *vox media* of which the most prominent element was the enclosure.”¹⁰ The term is composed of Median **pari* “around” and **daeza* “wall”; the basic meaning of the term is therefore “walled enclosure.”¹¹

This is the semantic field determining the use of the Hebrew equivalent פֶּרֶדֶס in the early Achaemenid period. In the Persian material, there is a

⁵ Bremmer 1999, 2.

⁶ Bremmer 1999, 2.

⁷ Cf. Bremmer 1999, 2.

⁸ Bremmer 1999, 5.

⁹ Cf. Bremmer 1999, 5.

¹⁰ Bremmer 1999, 5.

¹¹ Kent 1953; Hinz and Koch 1987, 1.160.

strong connection between trees (and gardens of the **paridaeza* type generally) and the Persian kings.¹² That relation between kings and gardens is also found in the Hebrew Bible. It existed, indeed, even before the loanword פֶּרֶס became part of the Hebrew language.

Compare, for example, 2 Kgs 21.18:

וַיִּשְׁכַּב מֶנְשֶׁה עַם־אֲבֹתָיו וַיִּקְבֶּר בְּגִן־בֵּיתוֹ בְּגִן־עֵזָא וַיִּמְלֹךְ אֲמֹן בְּגִן תַּחְתָּיו:

Or, to adduce another example, 2 Kgs 21.26:

וַיִּקְבֶּר אֹתוֹ בַּקְבָּרָתוֹ בְּגִן־עֵזָא וַיִּמְלֹךְ יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ בְּגִן תַּחְתָּיו:

We will soon return to these examples. Let us note here, for the moment, that, once the loanword פֶּרֶס had been created in Hebrew, it was used in connection with royalty, just like the term גֶּן was often used in conjunction with royal activities. There are only three mentions of פֶּרֶס in the Hebrew Bible, and they all have a royal connotation: Nehemiah 2.8, Qoheleth 2.5, and Song of Songs 4.13.

Whereas פֶּרֶס is used sparingly in the Hebrew Bible, the Greek Bible very often employs παράδεισος. The Hebrew פֶּרֶס is always rendered, in the Septuagint, by παράδεισος. In Neh. 2.8 we find the following statement: καὶ ἐπιστολὴν ἐπὶ Ασάφ φύλακα τοῦ παραδείσου ὅς ἐστιν τῷ βασιλεῖ ὥστε δοῦναί μοι ξύλα στεγᾶσαι τὰς πύλας καὶ εἰς τὸ τεῖχος τῆς πόλεως καὶ εἰς οἶκον ὃν εἰσελεύσομαι εἰς αὐτόν καὶ ἔδωκέν μοι ὁ βασιλεὺς ὡς χεῖρ θεοῦ ἢ ἀγαθή. Here, τοῦ παραδείσου ὅς ἐστιν τῷ βασιλεῖ translates לְמֶלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הִפְרֵס אֵשֶׁר, and this is a straightforward reference to the tree plantation of the king,¹³ a plantation with a guardian.

However, as I pointed out, παράδεισος is also used in order to provide a translation for the typical Hebrew term for “garden” or “park,” i.e. גֶּן. And the Septuagint at times translates גֶּן with κήπος, and it also does so when royal or other leading characters are involved in one way or another. Compare the following passages from 2 Kings 21.18, 26, whose Hebrew original I referred to above:

καὶ ἐκοιμήθη Μανασσῆς μετὰ τῶν πατέρων αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐτάφη ἐν τῷ κήπῳ τοῦ οἴκου αὐτοῦ ἐν κήπῳ Οὐζα καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν Ἀμων υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ἀντ’ αὐτοῦ.

καὶ ἔθαψαν αὐτὸν ἐν τῷ τάφῳ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ κήπῳ Οὐζα καὶ ἐβασίλευσεν Ἰωσίας υἱὸς αὐτοῦ ἀντ’ αὐτοῦ.

So there is a difference between κήπος and παράδεισος: the κήπος is a garden, and can be a garden owned by a king, and the παράδεισος is a specific type of garden, plantation, etc. That there is a difference between

¹² Cf. Briant 1996, 2.244–50. ¹³ Cf. Bremmer 1999, 5.

both terms is also borne out by the fact that the Old Greek of Ecclesiastes (2.5) refers to both: ἐποίησά μοι κήπους καὶ παραδείσους καὶ ἐφύτευσα ἐν αὐτοῖς ξύλον παν καρποῦ. Since the presumed speaker of this text is King Solomon, it becomes obvious from this passage that both types of gardens could be owned by kings. In fact, in the Hebrew of Qoh. 2.5, both terms occur together when גִּנּוֹת וּפְרָדִים are mentioned, gardens which are seen as the royal gardens of King Solomon (cf. Qoh. 1.1).

With regard to gardens in Judaea in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, it is especially noteworthy that they were, in the tradition of the Hellenistic dynasties, the prerogative of the ruler; private houses, on the other hand, only had “courtyards . . . paved with beaten earth, plaster, and usually stone,”¹⁴ whereas “[t]he palatial gardens followed the Hellenistic *paradeisos* tradition and were built in the royal estates outside the city.”¹⁵ Gardens, certainly those in the παράδεισος tradition, were the prerogative of royalty.

To sum up thus far: both types of gardens, גִּנּוֹת and פְּרָדִים, could be royal gardens, i.e. palace gardens – compare especially the passage about Manasseh’s burial in “his garden” – but only one of them – the פְּרָדִים/παράδεισος – can have the function, in some cases, of supplying plants, trees (as building materials), etc.¹⁶

How does all of that tie in with the overall topic of this paper? The point is that our survey of the terminology used in the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint will enable us to understand, in greater depth than is usually the case, the significance of certain important passages in the Gospel of John which involve a royal figure and a garden.

We tend to think it is a well-known fact that Jesus is painted, in all four gospels, as spending the night before his arrest in the *garden* of Gethsemane. However, this is actually a misunderstanding due to a conflation in the traditional perception of the four gospels. The concept of gospel harmonies seems to come naturally to readers of the New Testament – and, indeed, to many New Testament scholars! The place in question in the Passion narratives is actually named only by the Synoptics, and they do not refer to it as a garden, but as a χωρίον, a “piece of land.” Luke is slightly different from the other Synoptics in that he mentions the Mount of Olives but refers neither to a garden *nor* to a place called Gethsemane.

¹⁴ Eviyasaf 2006, 200. ¹⁵ Eviyasaf 2006, 203.

¹⁶ Cf. Bremmer 1999, 5–10. On royal (mortuary) gardens and their supposed cultic purposes, see Stavrakopoulou 2006.

John, however, speaks of a κήπος, a garden – more than once! – but does not name that garden. Indeed, he speaks of two different gardens: the one in which Jesus spends the night before his arrest, and the garden in which he is buried. They may be supposed to be identical, but this is impossible to demonstrate.

For a number of reasons, which will become obvious in due course, I shall now concentrate on the relevant passages in the Gospel of John. Let us start with the use of the term κήπος: it is interesting that the term παράδεισος is not employed here. In the whole of the New Testament, we find it only three times, and never in Johannine literature: Luke 23.43; 2 Cors 12.4 and Rev.2.7.

What follows are the passages in John that refer to a κήπος:

John 18.1: Ταῦτα εἰπὼν Ἰησοῦς ἐξῆλθεν σὺν τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ πέραν τοῦ χειμάρρου τοῦ Κεδρὼν, ὅπου ἦν κήπος, εἰς ὃν εἰσῆλθεν αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ.

When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples across the Kidron valley, where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. (RSV)

John 18.26: Λέγει εἰς ἐκ τῶν δούλων τοῦ ἀρχιερέως, συγγενῆς ὦν οὐ ἀπέκοψεν Πέτρος τὸ ὠτίον, Οὐκ ἐγὼ σε εἶδον ἐν τῷ κήπῳ μετ' αὐτοῦ;

One of the servants of the high priest, a kinsman of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" (RSV)

John 19.41: ἦν δὲ ἐν τῷ τόπῳ ὅπου ἐσταυρώθη κήπος, καὶ ἐν τῷ κήπῳ μνηεῖον καινὸν ἐν ᾧ οὐδέπω οὐδεὶς ἦν τεθειμένος.

Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. (RSV)

Also compare John 20.15:

Λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς, Γύναι, τί κλαίεις; τίνα ζητεῖς; ἐκείνη δοκοῦσα ὅτι ὁ κηπουρὸς ἐστίν λέγει αὐτῇ, Κύριε, εἰ σὺ ἐβάστασας αὐτόν, εἰπέ μοι ποῦ ἔθηκας αὐτόν, καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀρῶ.

Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." (RSV)

Let us first look at the "strategic" importance of these mentions of κήπος in the Gospel of John. The garden is significant because it is the place where Jesus used to meet with his disciples (cf. John 18.2) and because it is the place where he spends the last hours before the beginning of his passion. The reader is again reminded of the importance of the garden when the servant of the High Priest refers the reader back to the scene of the arrest of Jesus. In John 19, we are then told about another garden (or

maybe the same garden?), “in the place” where Jesus is crucified, and in that garden is found the tomb in which he will be laid to rest.

C. K. Barrett, in his commentary on the Gospel of John, notices the use of κήπος in John, as opposed to its absence in the Synoptics, and goes on to say:

κήπος, if it means “orchard” or “plantation,” will agree well enough with χωρίον. John says also, with less probability, that the crucifixion and burial took place in a κήπος (19.41). εἰσῆλθεν, ἐξῆλθεν in vv. 1, 4, suggest a walled enclosure, and from v. 2 we learn that Jesus and his disciples frequented the place ... The dropping of the name Gethsemane, and the addition of Kedron and κήπος, are taken by Dodd to be strong evidence that John was not using Mark. These facts cannot, however, prove more than that Mark was not John’s only source of information, which is certainly true.¹⁷

As Barrett rightly points out, 19.41 is “preparing for 20.15”¹⁸ where Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene as the gardener. I shall return to that observation in a moment. The interesting point is that Barrett, Bultmann, Schnackenburg, and all the other great commentators on the Gospel of John – certainly all those I have been able to consult – fail to see the royal and messianic connotations of John 18.1, 19.41, and 20.15. The only commentator who comes close to realizing it, but then takes a wrong turn, is Raymond Brown, dealing with the views of Cyril of Alexandria and Aquinas and their treatment by D. M. Stanley and B. P. Robinson.¹⁹ He writes:

D. M. Stanley and B. P. Robinson ... following an ancient tradition ... think that in setting the struggle between Judas (the tool of Satan) and Jesus in a garden, John is alluding to the theme of the Garden of Paradise in Gen. ii-iii. Some of the proposed paradise motifs (Tree of Life) emerge from combining this garden with the garden mentioned in xix 41–42, where Jesus was crucified, buried and rose; but nothing in John suggest that the same garden is involved in both episodes. Moreover, John does not use the word *paradeisos* found in the Genesis story, even though that word is known elsewhere in the Johannine writings (Rev. ii 7). Thus the symbolic exegesis is hard to justify.²⁰

And he adds, in his notes on 19.41:

We are not certain what type of garden John envisages, for later Jewish law discouraged the planting of fruit trees near a site of burial.²¹

¹⁷ Barrett 1978, 517–18.

¹⁸ Barrett 1978, 560.

¹⁹ Cf. Robinson 1966. After I had already finished the present study, I came across Wyatt 1990. Wyatt does interpret John 19 messianically; cf. the discussion below, especially n. 28.

²⁰ Brown 1966–70, 2.806. ²¹ Brown 1966–70, 2.943.

That Brown comes so close but then fails to see the royal connotation is due to the fact that commentators are being sidetracked by the perceived importance of the concept of paradise, and by the lack of the term παράδεισος in the relevant Johannine passages. Also, his judgment is impaired by the fact that he privileges later rabbinic material, instead of going first for the biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts. Brown comes closer to identifying the royal connotation when he asks, in *The Death of the Messiah*:

Was the garden burial of Jesus remembered because it was seen as symbolically appropriate for the Son of David? Was the tradition recalled by John in particular because of his emphasis that Jesus of Nazareth on the cross was triumphantly proclaimed as “the king of the Jews”? The evidence for this thesis is not sufficient to establish proof, but such a symbolism would be a most appropriate conclusion to John’s P[assion] N[arrative].²²

What are we to make of the use of κήπος, then, and what are its connotations? As we shall see, the “evidence” for the thesis of “the garden burial of Jesus . . . as [being] symbolically appropriate for the Son of David” is in fact “sufficient to establish proof.” The Gospel of John, when using κήπος, implicitly makes a few points: it is clear that a proper garden in the Near Eastern sense of the term is referred to, i.e. an enclosed, well-defined plot of land where fruit, vegetables, and trees are cultivated. Also, by using the term, the author evokes the uses of κήπος in their respective contexts in the Septuagint. Thus an educated Jewish or Christian reader of the Gospel of John will have understood the intertextual relations between the passage in John and the mentions of κήπος in the Septuagint and other Hellenistic Jewish literature: among the mental images evoked in the reader by the scene depicting Jesus during the night before the arrest will most likely have been reminiscences of the tombs of Manasseh and Amon in 2 Kings 21.18, 26 and the mention of the tomb of David in the *[King’s] Garden* in Neh. 3.16 LXX:

[14 καὶ τὴν πύλην τῆς κοπρίας ἐκράτησεν Μελχια υἱὸς Πηθαβ ἄρχων περιχώρου Βηθαχαρμ αὐτὸς καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐσκέπασαν αὐτὴν καὶ ἔστησαν θύρας αὐτῆς καὶ κλεῖθρα αὐτῆς καὶ μοχλοὺς αὐτῆς.

15 καὶ τὸ τεῖχος κολυμβήθρας τῶν κωδίων τῇ κουρᾷ τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ ἕως τῶν κλιμάκων τῶν καταβαινουσῶν ἀπὸ πόλεως Δαυιδ].

16 ὁπίσω αὐτοῦ ἐκράτησεν Νεεμίας υἱὸς Αζαβουχ ἄρχων ἡμίσεος περιχώρου Βηθσουρ ἕως κήπου τάφου Δαυιδ καὶ ἕως τῆς κολυμβήθρας τῆς γεγυμνίας καὶ ἕως Βηθαγαβαριμ.

²² Brown 1994, 2.1270.

Behind him Neemias son of Azbouch, ruler of half the area around Bethsour, took control as far as the garden of the grave of Dauid and as far as the artificial pool and as far as Bethaggabarim. (2 *Esdras* 13.16, New English Translation of the Septuagint)

It is indeed a remarkable fact that the ancient world is full of examples of royal burials in palace gardens. This is a general observation, but there is also the special significance of the garden mentioned in 2 Kings 21.18, 26 in connection with the burials of Manasseh and Amon and the mentions of the King's Garden, which was presumably identical with the garden of 2 Kgs 21.18, 26, in 2 Kgs 25.4//Jer. 5.7, Jer. 39.4 and Neh. 3.15.²³ And Neh. 3.16 LXX links, as we just heard, the King's Garden with the tomb of David. Acts 2.29 refers to that tomb, as does Josephus (*Jewish War* 1.61).²⁴ As Stordalen rightly points out,

Assuming that the short notes [i.e. in the passages just quoted] contain historically reliable information, one would concede that the King's Garden was located in the Kidron Valley, outside and to the south-east of the Jebusite citadel. Judging from archaeological remains, such a garden would have been watered through channels and aqueducts from the Gihon source, possibly also from En-rogel near the floor of the valley.²⁵

Taking all of the above into account, and realizing that the location of the historical King's Garden is likely to have been in the Kidron valley, it becomes extremely likely that the mention of the garden, and indeed of a garden in the Kidron Valley (John 18.1), in the Gospel of John was intended to make an extremely important symbolic point: the tomb of Jesus, like that of David and other Davidic rulers, is located in a garden (most likely, in the traditional King's Garden mentioned in the Scriptures). Also, the amount of spices Nicodemus is said to have provided for the grave is appropriate for a royal burial.²⁶ The implicit statement is that Jesus is the legitimate heir of David and the Messiah of Israel.

This is reinforced by the fact that the risen Christ appears to Mary Magdalene as the κηπουρός, the gardener. This, too, carries royal overtones, since kings in the ancient Near East were, as I pointed out earlier, often depicted as gardeners. This is also where the comparison with Genesis 2–3 comes in. As R. E. Brown states, “[s]ome scholars have . . . tried to find a parallel between the garden across the Kidron and the paradise

²³ Also see Na'aman 2004, who is sure that the “garden of Uzza” and the “King's Garden” were one and the same. Cf. Wyatt 1990, 30, who makes a similar point.

²⁴ I thank M. Bockmuehl for drawing my attention to the passage in Josephus.

²⁵ Stordalen 2000, 101–02.

²⁶ I thank R. Bauckham for drawing my attention to this point.

(*paradeisos*) of Genesis 2.8 where God placed the first human being and where sin was first committed.”²⁷ Brown rejects this interpretation; our analysis, however, supports it strongly: Adam, in Genesis 2–3, is the royal “gardener” of Eden, and John 19.38b–42 implicitly sees Adam as the prefiguration of Christ, the royal *κεπουρός*.²⁸

The main point is that Jesus is painted, in the Gospel of John, as the true Davidide and King Messiah, buried in the King’s Garden and demonstrating his messiahship by rising from the grave in the very same garden in which, according to tradition (cf. Neh. 3.16 LXX), David’s tomb was located.

I shall now sum up my observations and put them in perspective, and I shall do so with special regard to the significance of the garden or gardens mentioned in the Gospel of John. As we have seen, there is, in the Hebrew Bible like in other ancient Near Eastern literary documents, an obvious connection between gardens, both real and imagined, and kings, both divine and human. I have here concentrated on human kings and their gardens, with regard to instances of the use of *גן* and *בִּרְדָּס*. I have also pointed out that gardens play a significant role in the Gospel of John, and I gave some examples of typical interpretations of the relevant passages as produced by some of the most prominent New Testament scholars of recent times. My point is that, as far as I can see, the interpretations of the significance of the *κήπος* or *κήποι* in John which they have provided are not satisfactory. More recent research on imagery in the Gospel of John has not rectified that; cf. the statement by Paul N. Anderson in a recent volume on imagery and theology in John:

The winter-flowing Kidron is mentioned only in John, as is the site’s being a garden (Gethsemane in the Synoptics is not explicitly described as a “garden”), and these and other sorts of details imply first-hand knowledge rather than symbolizing or theologizing devices added to the narrative. Therefore, unless there is

²⁷ Brown 1994, 2.1270. It is not insignificant, I think, that Aquila translates *גן* in Gen. 2.8 as *κήπος*, not as *παράδεισος*! I thank A. Kubis (Ecole Biblique, Jerusalem) for drawing my attention to this fact.

²⁸ This was also seen by Wyatt 1990, who concludes that in John 19, Christ as the “gardener” mirrors Adam (Eden’s royal gardener), is the “second Man” to Adam’s “first Man,” and is thus characterized as the Messiah. I share this view, but arrive at it from a different starting point; see above. Contrary to Wyatt’s view, however, the messianic interpretation of Jesus put forward in John 19 is based not solely on the implicit Adam–Christ typology, but rests on a much broader foundation, as analyzed in the present study. Wyatt’s interpretation moves entirely within the realm of the mythological and the symbolical. It is decisive, however, to see that the circumstances described in John 19.38–41 tie in perfectly with what is known of the historical background, especially with regard to Hellenistic gardens in Judaea, and with a coherent interpretation of the relevant Old and New Testament texts.

a critical reason for considering them otherwise, these sorts of details are best considered innocent of symbolization and theologization, at least given the facts of their presentation.²⁹

As I think I have shown, the opposite is in fact true. Anderson overlooks the royal connotation and creates a false dichotomy between historical events and sites on the one hand and their potential theological symbolism on the other, which leads to an erroneous conclusion with regard to one of the most highly charged symbolic statements in the Gospel of John.

This brings me to my last point, a more general one. What my paper has hopefully demonstrated is that a reading of the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, and the New Testament that is informed by the much-maligned History of Religions approach can be very fruitful and can help to uncover aspects of a text that have so far been overlooked. An adequate understanding of the imagery and symbolism of the Hebrew Bible and of other ancient Near Eastern literatures are indispensable for an adequate understanding of many New Testament texts.

²⁹ Anderson 2006, 190.

*Philo's scholarly inquiries into
the story of paradise*

Maren R. Niehoff

Philo is our earliest extant witness to an exegetical interest in paradise among Alexandrian Jews. While no fragment of Demetrius' questions has survived on this topic and neither Aristeeas, Artapanus nor Ezekiel the Tragedian were interested in it, Philo provides evidence of a lively discussion in the first century CE. These discussions relate to specific motifs in the story of paradise, but reflect a more fundamental controversy about reading strategies of Scripture. Were scholarly methods to be applied or not? Was the idea of myth in Scripture acceptable or should the text rather be interpreted allegorically?

In these distinctly hermeneutical matters Alexandrian Jews went their own distinct way, often using surprisingly modern methods of scholarship and anticipating their brethren in the Land of Israel for several centuries.¹ The author of the *Book of Jubilees*, who is the first to expand on the story of paradise in the Land of Israel, paraphrases the biblical story, adding significant material only on the issue of Shabbat observance.² *1 Enoch* 32.3 and the *Testament of Levi* 18.10, the dates of which are very uncertain, introduce apocalyptic and eschatological perspectives, which are also developed in the New Testament (Luke 23.43, Rev. 2.7). In these works the biblical text is not in itself an object of inquiry, but rather serves symbolical functions in an overall religious framework. Indeed, it is only rabbinic midrash *Genesis Rabbah*, redacted probably in the early fifth century, which shows a similarly scholarly approach with attention to each verse.

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¹ For details on the connection between Jewish exegetes in Alexandria and their Homeric colleagues, see: M. R. Niehoff, *Jewish Bible Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria* (forthcoming at Cambridge University Press).

² See also Segal 2007, 47–58.

Philo's references to other Jewish exegetes indicate that he did not work in an intellectual vacuum, but in a vibrant community with different views. While the issues discussed in Alexandria were not identical to those dividing Jews in the Land of Israel into different groups and sects, the rich diversity of the Alexandrian environment has always to be kept in mind.³ Much of it can hardly be recovered due to the selective survival of the sources. Yet Philo plays a significant role, not only because so many of his writings have survived but also because he mentions many of his colleagues, thus permitting us a glance into the broader picture.

According to Philo's testimony, the Alexandrian Jewish community embraced two basic exegetical approaches, a literal and an allegorical. Combining the two creatively in his own work, Philo looks to his colleagues with a combination of approval and criticism. He mentions some colleagues, who read the story of paradise literally and suggested that it treats a garden (κῆπος) where a special tree grants life by reversing the effects of poisonous plants (*QG* 1.8, 10). Did some of the literal readers go so far as to identify the biblical story as a myth parallel to the Tower of Babel? In the latter context Philo's colleagues had posed the following provocative question:⁴

Yet do you still speak solemnly about the ordinances as if they contain the canons of truth herself? For behold, the books called holy by you contain also myths about which you regularly laugh whenever you hear others relating them. (*Conf.* 3)

While Philo does not explicitly refer to such interpretations of the story of paradise, he is nevertheless anxious to exclude the possibility that it may be taken thus. He insists that the details of the story "are not mythical fictions (μύθου πλάσματα), such as the poets and sophists delight in" (*Opif.* 157). Moreover, Philo appeals to his readers:

May no such impiety possess man's reasoning as to suppose that God tills the soil and plants gardens, for we shall have to inquire immediately for what reason [He

³ On issues provoking controversy in the Land of Israel, see esp. Baumgarten 1997; preliminary research into Philo's exegetical environment has been done by Hay 1991b.

⁴ For a detailed discussion of these exegetes, their Jewish background, and commitment to Aristotelian scholarship, see Niehoff "Recherche homérique et exégèse biblique à Alexandrie. Le Cas de la Tour de Babel," forthcoming in: S. Inowlocki and B. Decharneux (eds.), "Philon d'Alexandrie : un penseur à l'intersection des cultures gréco-romaine, orientale, juive, et chrétienne," Actes du colloque de Bruxelles, 26–28 juin 2007 (Brepols 2010). This investigation into the connection between Jewish Bible exegesis and Homeric scholarship follows the insights of the Jerusalem conference in 1999 (Finkelberg and Stroumsa 2003) that similar dynamics characterized the formation of canons in Greek, Jewish, Christian, and other societies.

would do so], for certainly not in order to provide Himself with cheerful repose or pleasure – may no such mythical fiction (μῦθοποιία) ever enter our mind! (*Leg.* 1.43)⁵

Philo emerges in this passage as a conservative exegete like Aristobulus or Aristeas, who does not accept the idea of mythological motifs in the Jewish Scriptures.⁶ For him, the Torah conveys absolute, philosophical truth and can therefore not have transmitted an overtly anthropomorphic notion of God. His apologetic tone, however, indicates that other Jews in Alexandria adopted a broader approach and acknowledged the mythological dimension of the biblical story. Such colleagues were in Philo's view gravely mistaken.

Philo looked more favorably on colleagues who allegorized the story of paradise, even if he disagreed with some details of their interpretation. He thus mentions "some who say" that the tree of life is to be understood as the heart, because the heart is the cause of life (*Leg.* 1.59). In Philo's view, this interpretation is too medical, falling short of philosophical insight, yet he still acknowledges it sympathetically. Other allegorizations of the tree of life are recorded by him:

Some say that the tree of life is the earth, because it causes everything to sprout ...

And some [identify the tree as] the sun, because it is really and truly in the middle of the planets and the cause of the seasons, through which everything comes into being.

And some say that the tree of life is the government of the soul, because it invigorates and fortifies the faculty of the senses ...

But distinguished and excellent men say that the tree of life is the best of virtues in man, piety, through which exclusively the mind becomes immortalized. (*QG* 1.10)

The context of these different allegorizations of the tree of life can no longer be known. They may have been part of written commentaries or else oral traditions handed down in the Alexandrian synagogues. Philo's report may moreover rely on an earlier collection of interpretations. Whatever the case may be, he suggests that the explanations were rather short, relying on the motif of the tree's centrality in the garden as well as the notion of life. It is moreover clear that the tree of life was a particular

⁵ See also *Plant.* 33–35.

⁶ Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 8.10.2; while the author of the *Letter of Aristeas* does not speak about myth, he is the first extant writer calling Scripture "holy" and defending it against critical, secular uses, such as presentation on the stage (*Let. Aris.* 5, 313–16).

focus of exegetical attention. Philo does not preserve earlier allegorical interpretations of other aspects of the biblical story of paradise.

While Philo also chooses allegorical interpretations, his approach immediately stands out by virtue of its novel scholarly character. He no longer presents simple analogies between a particular biblical motif and its symbolical meaning, but dwells on every verse of the story, submitting each expression to close scrutiny. Leaving behind the rather more naïve approach of his predecessors, Philo often uses the verbs ζητέω and διαπορέω in order to address problems in the text.⁷ He understood his *Allegorical Commentary* as an aporetic inquiry, indicating his aspirations to consistency by formulations such as “the question next in sequence” or the “following question.”⁸

Two features are central to Philo's inquiry into the story of paradise, namely his attention to contradictions between verses and his concern for verisimilitude. Both kinds of textual problems were already treated in the work of the Jewish exegete Demetrius, who lived in Alexandria in the middle of the second century BCE.⁹ While Philo continued this tradition of Jewish Bible scholarship, his precise perspective and answers have changed significantly. Most importantly, he no longer remained on the literal level, but instead used the literal scholarly methods to prepare his readers for allegorical interpretations of paradise. Philo thus offered a new synthesis of literal scholarship and allegorical readings, which significantly anticipated Porphyry's work.

⁷ E.g. *Leg.* 1.85, 90, 101. ⁸ E.g. *Leg.* 1.101; *Post.* 49.

⁹ The third-century date of Demetrius, which has been suggested by Freudenthal (1874–79, 1.44–45) and is often repeated since (see esp. Gutman 1969, 1.132–47; Gruen 1998, 112–18) has to be questioned. It rests on the assumption that the fragments mentioned by Eusebius belong to the same author as the one small fragment quoted by Clement, which contains a reference to Ptolemy IV (Clem. Alex., *Strom.* 1.21.141.1–2). The connection between these fragments, however, is far from self-evident. Eusebius and Clement may instead have referred to different men by the same name. The style of Clement's Demetrius significantly differs from that of Eusebius' Demetrius. Instead of working on the details of the biblical text, Clement's Demetrius is said to have written a book concerning the kings of Judea, referring to the captivity of the tribes under Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar as well as to the rule of Ptolemy IV. This Demetrius is a historian interested in political events ranging from late biblical times to his own period. Eusebius' Demetrius, by contrast, never placed biblical material into an external framework of historical calculation. Unlike his namesake, he thus did not follow in the footsteps of their fellow Alexandrian Eratosthenes, whose *Chronological Tables* placed the capture of Troy on the same historical plane as the conquests of Alexander the Great (Fraser 1972, 1.456–58, and sources there). The historian Demetrius mentioned by Clement must thus be distinguished from the exegete Demetrius mentioned by Eusebius. Given the identity of their names, it is not surprising that scholars conflated their works. Similar mistakes occurred also with regard to Greek scholars in Alexandria. Felix Jacoby conclusively showed that Sosibius the textual scholar must be distinguished from Sosibius the historian (*FGH* 3.635–37).

PROBLEMS OF CONTRADICTIONS

Two contradictions in the biblical story of paradise initially caught Philo's attention. He asked "what one should say" concerning the problem of the death penalty for eating from the tree of knowledge. On the literal level, Philo admits, there is a contradiction between Gen. 2.17, where God threatens to implement the penalty, and Gen. 4.1, where Adam and Eve are not only said to live after eating from the tree, but even to beget children (*Leg.* 1.105). The contradiction, which Philo addresses here, concerns the facts conveyed by different verses. His question pertains to the consistency of the biblical story and, ultimately, the image of God as a reliable and omnipotent figure. Furthermore, Philo inquired into a minute question of biblical style, asking whether there was no contradiction between the positive command to eat from all the trees in the Garden, formulated in the singular person, and the restriction not to eat from the tree of knowledge, which was phrased in the plural (*Leg.* 1.101).

Approximately two centuries earlier Demetrius had already dealt with similar contradictions between biblical verses. He once referred to "someone [who] inquired how the Israelites had weapons, seeing that they departed from Egypt unarmed" (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.29.16). Demetrius himself wondered whether there was no contradiction between Exod. 2.21, where Moses and Zipporah marry, and LXX Gen. 25.3, where Raguel is mentioned. If the latter was indeed Zipporah's grandfather, it is implied that she lived a generation before Moses and thus could not marry him (Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.29.1–3). These questions of Demetrius and his anonymous colleague are embedded in the Aristotelian tradition of *Aporemata* on Homer's epics. Aristotle addressed famous cruxes, such as the conflicting descriptions of Crete in *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.¹⁰ While the extant fragments of Aristotle's work no longer allow us to judge its precise scope, Diogenes Laertius knew of six volumes (DL 5.26), thus indicating that Aristotle addressed a very considerable number of individual lines. The purpose of these questions and answers is easily recognized. Parallel to chapter 25 of his *Poetics* Aristotle wished to show that apparent problems of the text can be solved if the epics are properly appreciated as a piece of literature.¹¹ Contradictions between epic lines continued to be discussed with particular fervency in Alexandria, where some took them as a

¹⁰ Aristotle, *Homeric Questions* fragm. 146 (ed. Rose); on the genre of "questions and answers" see the classic article by Gudemann 1927, as well as the recent discussions by Jacob 2003 and Papadoyannakis 2006.

¹¹ Richardson 1992.

proof of different authors.¹² Aristarchus, the foremost Alexandrian scholar whose Aristotelian inclinations have recently been emphasized, also paid close attention to contradictions, which he often took as an indication of textual corruptions.¹³

Philo's questions concerning the contradictions in the story of paradise are thus firmly rooted in both Alexandrian Bible exegesis and Homeric scholarship in Aristotelian style. His answers, however, are of a new kind. While his Alexandrian colleagues and predecessors solved problems of contradictions by harmonizing the verses on the literal level, he offered metaphorical or symbolical readings. Philo thus insisted that Adam and Eve continued to live only in a physical sense, while the death penalty had actually been implemented with regard to their soul. His answer relies on a Classical Platonic motif, namely the notion that the pursuit of philosophy leads to an ethereal state, where the body and its earthly desires are practically dead.¹⁴ Applying this notion to Gen. 2.17, Philo suggests that "death is of two kinds, one pertaining to man, the other in particular to the soul" (*Leg.* 1.105). The death of the soul is thus presented as a state of merely physical existence, which results from a wicked and unspiritual lifestyle.¹⁵ While Adam and Eve lived in a physical sense after eating from the tree of knowledge, they were, in Philo's view, dead as far as their soul was concerned, because they had disobeyed God and become wicked. The contradiction between the verses is thus solved, Philo combining the scholarly technique of question and answer with a distinctly Platonic motif. At the same time Philo has suggested that the allegorical

¹² Xenon and Hellanicus, named the χωρίζοντες, used discrepancies between *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* as yet a proof for their sensational claim that the epics had been written by two different authors; on their general tendency, see Proclus, *Vita Homeri* p. 27; for examples, see: *Schol. Il.* 2.356, where the author of *The Iliad* is said to have depicted Helen as forcibly following Paris, while the author of *The Odyssey* suggested that she came along willingly; *Schol. Il.* 10.476, where the term προπαροιθεῖν is said to have a temporal meaning in *The Iliad*, but a local meaning in *The Odyssey*; *Schol. Il.* 11.692, where "those who separate" dwell on the contradictory numbers of Nelos' sons; *Schol. Il.* 13.365, where the crux is discussed that different daughters of Priam are identified as the "fairest"; *Schol. Il.* 16.747, where "those who separate" suggest that the author of *The Iliad* did not present its heroes as using fish, while the author of *The Odyssey* did; *Schol. Il.* 21.416, where they point to the discrepancy between the author of *The Iliad*, who joins Aphrodite with Ares, while the author of *The Odyssey* depicts her as united with Hephaistos.

¹³ See *Schol. Il.* 3.395, where he identifies an "interpolation" on the grounds that there is a contradiction between *Il.* 3.396–98, where Helen sees Aphrodite as beautiful, and *Il.* 3.386, where the goddess is said to appear to her in the image of an old woman; on Aristarchus' Aristotelian tendencies, see Schironi 2009; on Aristotle's general influence on Alexandrian scholarship, see Richardson 1994.

¹⁴ *Phaed.* 80–81a; *Wis.* 7.13, 8.17, 15.3 stresses that immortality will be achieved by the devoted student of wisdom, thus testifying to the popularity of Plato's notions in Alexandria.

¹⁵ This expression is explicitly mentioned here for the first time in the extant Greek literature; in Philo's work it remains rare, the only other occurrence being *QG* 1.51.

reading “smoothes” the biblical narrative. Seeing that the literal sense is not satisfactory, containing a contradiction of verses, the allegorical meaning emerges as the unblemished message intended by Moses. Similarly, Philo solves the contradiction between the singular and the plural expressions by allegorizing the trees. The singular shows in his view that the acquisition of wisdom and virtue pertains to few stout individuals, while the plural reflects the multitude of people, who sin and fail to become wise. Philo thus assumes that the trees in the Garden represent virtue allegorically, while the tree of knowing good and evil is taken to refer to moral imperfection.¹⁶

Another contradiction is identified by Philo in God’s exchange with Eve. His solution to the problem uncovers his overall motivation:

And God said to the woman: what have you done? And she said: the serpent has beguiled me and I have eaten (Gen. 3.13). While God inquires of sense-perception concerning one thing (Gen. 3.12), she answers concerning another. For He inquires concerning [her guilt towards] man, while she does not speak about him, but says something about herself, namely “I have eaten,” and not “I have given.” Perhaps then allegorizing we shall solve the problem (μήποτ’ οὖν ἀλληγοῦντες λύσομεν τὸ ἀπορηθὲν) and show that the woman directly answers the question, for it is a matter of necessity that when she eats, man also eats. (*Leg.* 3.59–60)

In this passage Philo explicitly presents the allegorization of Eve as the solution to the textual problem on the literal level. He thus proceeds precisely in the way outlined in *On the Confusion of Tongues*, where he programmatically stated that his allegorizations are meant to remove “stumbling-blocks” (*Conf.* 14). In the case of Eve it is remarkable that Philo highlights the discrepancy between the verses even though he assumes the allegory of woman as sense-perception right from the beginning. This equation is so natural for him that he already formulates his initial question concerning God’s inquiry of “sense-perception.” While the answer is thus axiomatically assumed, the textual problem is nevertheless expounded. Philo does so, because he is concerned with Moses’ authorial intention and suspects that his colleagues in Alexandria may accuse him of offering a whimsical interpretation which, in their view, has nothing to do with the original meaning of the text. Addressing the contradiction of

¹⁶ This allegory is rather unusual in Philo’s exegesis, because he normally allegorizes the tree of knowledge as virtue planted by God in man’s soul (*Leg.* 1.45). This flexibility on the part of Philo shows the degree to which allegory served him to solve textual problems of Scripture. The particular content of the allegory could liberally be adapted to the individual problem that had arisen from the text.

verses, Philo suggests to literal exegetes that the biblical text is problematic and therefore requires an interpretation, which is not immediately obvious. The latter is offered in a surprisingly hesitant mode, Philo stressing that "perhaps then" allegory will solve the problem. He evidently assumes an audience used to considering textual problems, but unfamiliar with allegory.

Philo's combination of allegorical or metaphorical interpretations with scholarly inquiries into contradictions of verses is highly exceptional. Living in first century Alexandria, he made a very significant and hitherto overlooked contribution to the development of allegorical theory. Using textual problems in order to question the hegemony of literal readings, Philo suggested that an allegorical meaning was intended by the author. This position is all the more remarkable as it is voiced in the center of literal scholarship where no consistent allegorical reader of Homer's epics is known.¹⁷ On the contrary, Alexandrian scholars distinguished themselves from the allegorical approach practiced in Pergamum. In this context it was important for Philo to show the serious and even scientific nature of allegory, suggesting by way of a literal analysis that Moses himself had actually implied it.

The roots of Philo's approach cannot be traced to the Stoic tradition, as has often been assumed.¹⁸ George R. Boys-Stones stressed that the Stoics generally offered allegories well aware of the fact that the author had not intended them.¹⁹ The extant examples of allegorical interpretations from this school do not connect them to scholarly inquiries into the literal text. Zeno proposed simple equations between a particular literal motif and its allegorical meaning without providing textual justifications.²⁰ An extant fragment of his *Homeric Problems* exposes, as Félix Buffière has already pointed out, a textual critic with no concern for allegory.²¹ Cleanthes, Chrysippus, and Crates appear to have proceeded in

¹⁷ To be sure, allegorical readers of the Egyptian Isis and Osiris myth are known and were apparently read by Plutarch. Yet such allegorists were connected with Egyptian texts and Egyptian priests, not with the Museum and Homeric scholarship; on the former aspect, see Horst 1984, esp. fragm. 5, 10, 17D, 20D.

¹⁸ For a summary of the research and bibliography, see Morris 1987, 876–79; Amir 1970; Stein 1937, 162–85.

¹⁹ Boys-Stones 2003, 189–216. ²⁰ *SVF* I.100, 168–70.

²¹ τὰ μὲν κατὰ δόξαν, τὰ δὲ κατὰ ἀληθειαν (*SVF* I.274); Buffière 1956, 146–48, who suggests that this fragment belongs to Zeno's early stage of thought, when he was still connected to Antisthenes and before he embarked on his own allegorical project; Steinmetz 1986, 19–21, who proposes to distinguish between Zeno's text-critical work on Homer's epics and his allegorical interpretation of Hesiod.

a similar way, offering allegorical interpretations in isolation from literal text-criticism.²²

Aristotle, on the other hand, is to some extent a precedent for Philo. Luc Brisson has already stressed that he accepted allegory as one way of saving myths.²³ In the extant fragments of Aristotle's *Aporemata Homerica* there is one example, where he offered an allegorical solution to a contradiction between Homeric lines.²⁴ Facing the conflicting descriptions of the sun, once as omniscient and once as relying on a messenger, Aristotle proposes three solutions. One of them suggests that "Lampetia was a messenger to Helios as vision is to man."²⁵ Significantly, Aristotle neither uses the term allegory nor claims exclusive authority for this solution. Philo, approaching the Jewish Scriptures in the first century CE, is a striking mirror image of Aristotle. While Platonic and Stoic motifs abound in his work, he is still committed to studying textual problems on the literal level, elaborating upon them in the spirit of Aristotle's questions and answers.

Philo's approach is innovative also within the Jewish community of Alexandria, where metaphorical interpretation/meaning was known since the time of Aristobulus and Aristeas. Aristobulus already assumed a notion of authorial intention, insisting that "our lawgiver Moses" expresses what he has to say in different manners, "using words concerning other referents."²⁶ Unlike Philo, however, Aristobulus points to common sense in order to show which allegorical meaning Moses had implied. He thus turns directly to the king, who supposedly raised the question concerning the anthropomorphisms in Scripture, and explains that when "we say 'the king has a mighty hand,' those who hear it refer it to the power that you possess" (*Praep. ev.* 8.10.7). The author of the *Letter of Aristeas* is even further removed from Philo's approach. Starting with the axiomatic assumption that relationships have a great influence on man's ethics, he stresses

²² Buffière 1956, 149–52; Pépin 1976, 128–31; similarly also Cornutus, on whom see Most 1989, esp. 2018–29; Crates, *Schol. Od.* 1289 = fragm. 61a, ed. Mette 1952, 83; Strabo 1.2.24; see also DL 4.23. The author of the Derveni papyrus, whose importance for the history of allegory has been stressed by Luc Brisson, also presents simple correlations between the names of certain gods and their underlying meaning, refraining from scholarly investigations into the consistency of the literal text (DP XIV–XXI, Brisson 2004, 32–35).

²³ Brisson 2004, 38–40.

²⁴ Note that Aristotle offered a "physical" interpretation of Helios' cattle, taking it as a reference to the amount of days in the lunar year (Aristotle, *Homeric Questions* fragm. 175 (ed. Rose)). It is no longer clear what precisely prompted Aristotle's allegorical reading, perhaps the unusual calculation of the herds or the emphasis on their immortality; see also the comments by Hintenlang 1961, 131–37, who stresses the unusual occurrence of allegory in Aristotle's exegetical work.

²⁵ Aristotle, *Homeric Questions*, fragm. 149 (ed. Rose).

²⁶ ἐφ' ἑτέρων πραγμάτων λόγους ποιούμενος (Aristobulus, *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 8.10.3).

the nature of Jewish monotheism, which needs to be protected from infiltration by lower forms of religion (*Let. Aris.* 130–41). Mosaic legislation on food is then read allegorically, without further justification, and presented as a means of protecting Jews from “being perverted by contact with others” (*Let. Aris.* 142).

Philo's approach relies on a delicate balance between the literal and the allegorical meaning of Scripture. On the one hand, he stresses problems in the literal text in order to make room for allegory, while, on the other hand, assuming authorial intention and anchoring allegory more than others within the given text. The literal dimension of Scripture is thus not altogether dismissed, but shown to be problematic to a degree that renders the allegorical meaning plausible. This double-bound position creates Philo's characteristic complexity and ambiguity.

PROBLEMS OF VERISIMILITUDE

Reading the story of paradise, Philo also identified verses which seemed to contradict truth. In this respect, too, he followed a tradition of Bible scholarship in Alexandria, which was inspired by Aristotle's work, yet once more used it for his own allegorical purposes. Demetrius' anonymous colleagues had already inquired into problems of verisimilitude, asking “why at all did Joseph at the meal give a fivefold portion to Benjamin even though he was incapable (μη δυναμένου αὐτοῦ) of taking in such quantities of meat?”²⁷ Moses is thus suspected of contradicting scientific truth when portraying a character as extending beyond his natural abilities. Demetrius' colleague solves this problem by considering the scene's larger literary context and argues that Joseph was concerned to rectify the unequal status of Jacob's sons. The unrealistic presentation is thus justified by reference to its specific narrative purpose in the drama of the hero's psychology.

Moreover, concern for realistic presentation is central to Aristotle's discussion in the twenty-fifth chapter of his *Poetics*. Assuming with Plato that the poet is an “imitator” of external referents, like a painter drawing from life, he suggests that the poet always imitates in one of three ways, namely either things as they are or were, or things as they are told or appear to be, or things as they ought to be (*Poet.* 1460b5–11). Facing the “criticisms [involved] in the problems,” Aristotle insists that poetry must not be judged by the standards of any other art (*Poet.* 1460b15–22).

²⁷ Demetrius *apud* Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.21.14–5, ed. Holladay 70.

Presentations of “impossible things” (ἀδύνατα) must therefore be properly appreciated in their narrative context and not taken as indications of Homer’s failure, as Zoilos, for example, had famously done.²⁸ While Aristotle stressed that unrealistic presentation must serve a poetic purpose, otherwise it is a failure, he fully justified it as long as it renders the passage “more astounding.”²⁹ He briefly illustrates his argument by the example of the pursuit of Hector, which he had already discussed in the previous chapter (*Poet.* 1460a11–18). The impossible element of this scene is Achilles’ shaking of the head, which is said to stop the Greeks from further pursuing Hector. Aristotle does not precisely explain in what way this implausibility increases the dramatic effect, but stresses that such an appeal to the irrational is suitable to the epic, while it would be ridiculous on the stage.³⁰

The question and answer of Demetrius’ colleague reflect a clear Aristotelian orientation. The expression μὴ δυναμένου αὐτοῦ closely resembles Aristotle’s formulations in the *Poetics* (ἀδύνατα) and the problem of verisimilitude revolves around a Classical issue of physical inability, paralleling Aristotle’s example of the horse with its two front legs thrown forward (*Poet.* 1460b18–9). While the solution does not explicitly refer to “astounding” effect, it considers the dramatic and narrative function of the scene, offering a psychological perspective based on context. Aristotle had recommended considering the literary context and the particular motivation of each hero (*Poet.* 1461a4–9).

In Alexandria the discussion of verisimilitude received new impetus. While Aristarchus hardly used the Classical Aristotelian term ἀδύνατος, the idea of a fault by unrealistic presentation remained a hermeneutic concern.³¹ Assuming that Homer’s original epics were generally true to reality, Aristarchus rejected some epic lines, arguing that they uncharacteristically conflict with reality.³² More importantly, however, in the

²⁸ μέμφεται τῷ ποιητῇ ὅτι λίαν γελοῖως πεποίηκεν, Zoilos, *Schol.* 5.4 (*FGH* fragm. 7, p. 111) see also Zoilos, *Schol. Il.* 5.20 (*FGH* fragm. 8, p. 111); see also Richardson 1992; Dupont-Roc and Lallot 1980, 387–90; Bywater 1909, 323–24.

²⁹ ἐπληκτικώτερον (*Poet.* 1460b16–32).

³⁰ *Poet.* 1460a15; see also the discussion by Dupont-Roc and Lallot 1980, 390–91.

³¹ Schironi 2009. The famous exception is *Schol. Il.* 16.97–100b, where Aristarchus invokes the notion of the impossible in order to reject a verse suggesting Achilles’ homosexuality. In this case, however, the athetesis does not rely on the Classical Aristotelian criterion of a contrast between the text and external reality, but on a contradiction between verses as well as the axiomatic assumption that erotic concerns are irrelevant.

³² See e.g. *Schol. Il.* 1.100a, 19.416–17a, 1.129a1, 2.55a, 2.76a, 2.319a1, 2.667, 3.74a, 8.189, 16.666b; note that Aristarchus regularly uses the terms γελοῖος and ἀπίθανος to indicate implausible motifs or verses.

wake of Alexander's conquests geographical issues became a major focus of Homeric scholarship in Alexandria (Strabo 1.3.3). Eratosthenes led the critical camp in the second century BCE, altogether denying the value of Homer as a geographer. In his view, the epics were written only for the purpose of entertainment and appeal to the soul.³³ Homer was often found to say foolish things with no connection to geographical reality.³⁴ Eratosthenes compared the poet to an old lady engaged in myth-making. Apollodorus, a student of both Eratosthenes and Aristarchus, devoted a special commentary to the Catalogue where he focused on questions of verisimilitude in geographical matters. The extant fragments indicate that he addressed critical issues raised by his teacher Eratosthenes, but tended in the spirit of Aristarchus to defend the Homeric text. Apollodorus often showed that Homeric passages contain an essential truth beneath the fictitious story (Strabo 10.2.10–6).

Following the Roman conquest of the East geographical questions once more engaged scholarly interest. Well aware of the new knowledge gained under Rome's rule, Strabo took up the defense of Homer around the turn of the era (Strabo 1.2.1).³⁵ Strabo assumed a middle position between Eratosthenes' flat denial of any geographic truth in the epics and Crates' naïve assumption of Homer's complete veracity.³⁶ In response to Eratosthenes Strabo developed a complex notion of myth, which involved source criticism. He argued that Homer's main purpose was to educate (σωφρονίζεσθαι) rather than amuse.³⁷ If his geographical descriptions were found to ignore or even contradict known facts, such as the seven mouths of the Nile or the position of the island Pharos, one must initially inquire whether they reflect the state of knowledge or the linguistic conventions of Homer's time.³⁸ Overall, Strabo argued, Homer did not wholly invent stories, but sometimes employed myths, which always preserve at least

³³ ψυχάγωγα, Strabo 1.2.3; 1.2.12; see also Fraser 1972, 1,525–29, who stresses the exceptionally critical position of Eratosthenes; Biraschi 2005, 76–77, stressing the immense influence and authority of Eratosthenes; cf. Geus 2002, 264–66, who regards Eratosthenes' remarks as strictly limited to geographical facts and concludes that his theory of poetry is nothing but an "empty formula."

³⁴ Strabo 1.2.7, 1.2.12, 1.2.14–15, 1.2.19.

³⁵ Strabo 1.2.1; for his awareness of Rome's contribution to geographical studies; see also Biraschi 2005, 82–83; Dueck 2000, 31–40, who stresses Strabo's deep interest in Homer and points to his personal background as one of the reasons for this.

³⁶ See also Schenkeveld 1976; Dueck 2000, 34, who stresses the difference between Strabo and Eratosthenes or an educational or purely literary conception of Homer.

³⁷ Strabo 1.2.8, see also 1.2.7; see also Dueck 2000, 34; Biraschi 2005, 83, who stresses the Roman context of Strabo's position.

³⁸ Strabo 1.2.10, 1.2.24.

traces (ἵχνη) of real persons and events (1.2.14). This is so, because Homer made detailed inquiries and knew geographical facts, but often chose to add fictional elements so as to arouse the interest of his audience (1.2.30). In Strabo's view, Homer could fabricate "impossible" scenes "to gratify the taste for the marvelous and entertaining."³⁹

A late contemporary of Strabo, Philo inquired into topical questions of verisimilitude in geographical matters. In the extant sources he is the first Jewish exegete to do so, asking whether Moses may have been ignorant of basic facts. Regarding paradise he raised the following problems:

It is worth inquiring why (ἄξιον δὲ διαποῆσαι διὰ τί) the two rivers Pheison and Geon encompass countries, the one Evilat, the other Ethiopia, while none of the others [does so]. Yet the Tigris is said to be over against the Assyrians, while the Euphrates is not said to be over against anything (Gen. 2.11–4).

And yet in reality (πρὸς τὸ ἐληθέξ) the Euphrates flows round several countries and has many facing it.

But the Biblical story is not about a river, but about the improvement of character (*Leg.* 1.85). In a different context, Philo expresses himself thus:

What is the river that went out from Eden, by which Paradise is watered, and four rivers separated ... (Gen. 2.10)?

The sources of the Tigris and the Euphrates are said to flow from the Armenian mountains. But there is no paradise (ἡρῶν) nor are there the two other sources of the river.

Unless perhaps Paradise is somewhere remote from our inhabited world

(ἡ ἐκτὸς τῆς ἀνθρώπων ἐξουσίας ἐστὶν ἡ πόλις αἰώνια = ἔξω τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς οἰκουμένης) and has a river flowing under the earth, which waters many and great veins ... And these are the supposed sources, or rather the outflowings of the river, but properly the supposed sources, because in every respect Divine Scripture is true

(ὅτι πάντες οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἐκ τῆς πόλεως αἰώνιας ἐκπορεύονται = καὶ γὰρ πανταχοῦ ἐστιν ἡ ἱερὰ γραφή) ... (*QG* 1.12, ed. Aucher, trans. Marcus with emendations).

Both in the *Allegorical Commentary* and the *Questions and Answers on Genesis* Philo raises questions of verisimilitude concerning the rivers of the Garden of Eden. In the *Allegorical Commentary* Philo notes that the description of the Euphrates differs from that of the other rivers and inquires whether this concision reflects geographical reality. Assuming a remarkably critical position, Philo points to a significant discrepancy between Scripture and truth, acknowledging that the Euphrates "in

³⁹ τερατείαις καὶ τέρψεως χάριν (Strabo 1.2.35).

reality flows round several countries and has many facing it." He thus admits that Scripture, read literally, deviates from geographical truth, but insists that the story really is about the improvement of character. The very fact that there are problems on the literal level is taken as an indication that an allegorical reading is called for. Such allegorical solutions to problems of geography were not altogether foreign to Strabo. Once he says that Homer transmitted myths "for our instruction, using allegory."⁴⁰ The story of the wanderings of Odysseus, which had been exposed to sharp criticism, was a particularly compelling example in his view.

In the *Questions and Answers*, however, where Philo addresses less advanced readers, perhaps his own students, he insists that Scripture is "in every respect true." While admitting that no paradise is known to have existed in the area of the acknowledged sources of the Tigris and Euphrates, Philo offers a literal solution before embarking on an allegorical explanation. He thus suggests that paradise may be situated outside the inhabited world. In this way he affirms the truth value of Scripture by situating paradise in a place beyond human measurements and maps. This solution strikingly parallels the answer offered by some Homeric scholars to the question where Menelaus' wanderings had actually taken place. Some suggested that they were "outside Oceanus" and thus outside of contemporary maps.⁴¹

Finally, Philo inquires why the Euphrates and the other rivers of paradise had never been described in terms of having lips – a description preserved for the Nile (*Somn.* 2.300). Suspecting that some will find such an inquiry a "petty trifling," Philo insists that his question is profitable, leading to the following, remarkably critical conclusion:

But I hold that such things [as the expression "lips of the river"] are added to the Holy Scriptures in the way of seasonings for the improvement of the readers. (*Somn.* 2.301)

Parallel to Strabo, Philo assumes here that certain elements of the foundational text were written in order to achieve a better effect on the reader rather than with a view to truth.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that Philo's approach to the story of paradise was exceptionally scholarly. He combined for the first time stringent scholarship in the style of Demetrius and Homeric scholars with systematic allegorical readings. Philo thus hoped to show that his allegorical

⁴⁰ ὁ ἀλλήγορώων, Strabo 1.2.7.

⁴¹ Strabo 1.2.35; see also Engels 1999, 117–18.

interpretations of paradise were by no means whimsical, but had already been intended by Moses himself. In this way Philo rendered the biblical story relevant to his critical readers in first century Alexandria, showing them how the problems of inconsistencies and violations of geographical truth can be solved in the same way as similar problems had been solved in the Homeric epics.

Paradise in the Biblical Antiquities of Pseudo-Philo

Richard Bauckham

Eibert Tigchelaar concludes an essay on early Jewish views of Eden and paradise in these words: “The later identification of Eden with the future Paradise, the transposition of Paradise to heaven, or the distinction between a heavenly Paradise or Eden and its earthly counterpart are not yet made in the Early Jewish texts.”¹ This conclusion is accurate so far as the Enochic Book of Watchers, the Enochic Astronomical Book, *Jubilees*, and the texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls that he studies are concerned.² But a study of these works alone cannot demonstrate that the ideas he mentions in this conclusion “are not yet made in the Early Jewish texts” as such, unless “early” is given a more restricted sense than is usual. By the middle of the first century it was possible to locate paradise in the third heaven, as Paul very probably does (2 Cor. 12.2–4).

The Jewish texts most likely to help us in exploring whether, within the Second Temple period, the paradise of Genesis was identified with the eschatological abode of the righteous and whether the paradise of the righteous dead was located in the heavens are a group of three, evidently closely related works from the period between the two revolts: *4 Ezra*,³ *2 Baruch*, and the *Biblical Antiquities* of Pseudo-Philo. The present essay is confined to the last of these works, which differs from the other two in belonging to the genre of “rewritten Bible” rather than to that of apocalypse, but especially when it deals with eschatology is usually close to both the terminology and the ideas of the two apocalypses.⁴

The extant Latin text of *Biblical Antiquities*, generally agreed to derive via a Greek version from a Hebrew original, uses the word *paradysus* four

¹ Bremmer 1999, 57.

² Ostensibly the Parables of Enoch, on which Tigchelaar does include a section (47–49), identify the Garden of Eden with the abode of the righteous after death (*1 Enoch* 60.8; 61.12; 70.3–4), but he conjectures that the original text may not have done so.

³ On paradise in *4 Ezra*, see Stone 1966.

⁴ James 1971, 46–58; L. H. Feldman in James 1971, liv–lv; Jacobson 1996, 201; Fisk 2001, 37–38 n. 71; Hadot 1985, 157.

times (13.9; 19.10; 26.8; 32.8). (The word doubtless represents παρὰδείσος in the underlying Greek version and probably פֶּדֶס in the original Hebrew. The latter is already used of the Garden of Eden in the Aramaic of *1 Enoch* 32.3; 77.3.⁵) In addition, there is one reference to “the land of Havilah” (25.11), which is associated with Eden in Genesis 2.11–12, and one reference to the tree of life (11.15), which was generally agreed to be in paradise. We shall discuss these texts in the following order: 25.11; 26.8; 32.8; 19.10; 13.9; 11.15.⁶

25.10b–11: And then [Kenaz] examined the men of the tribe of Asher, who said, “We have found the seven golden idols which the Amorites call the sacred virgins, and we carried them off, along with the precious stones set on them, and hid them. And behold now they are stored beneath the summit of Mount Shechem. So send, and you will find them.” And Kenaz sent men and they removed them from there. [11] These are the virgins that, when called upon, showed the Amorites their deeds from hour to hour. For they are what seven sinful men devised after the flood. These are their names: Canaan, Futh, Selath, Nimrod, Elath, Desuath < >. Nor will there again be their like in the world, graven by the hand of a craftsman or adorned with the variety of painting. They were fixed and set up for worship of idols. These precious stones, among which were crystal (*christallinus*) and prase (*prasinus*), had been brought from the land of Havilah (*Lapides illi preciosi erant allati de terra Evilath, in quibus christallinus erat et prasinus*); and they were graven in appearance in the manner of open-work decoration. And one of them was engraved on the top, and another like spotted chrysoprase shone in its engraving as though it revealed the water of the deep lying beneath it. [25.12 describes the miraculous qualities of the stones.]

26.4a: [God is speaking to Kenaz] “But regarding the precious stones, I will command my angel, and he will take them and go and put them in the depths of the sea. I will order the deep, and it will swallow them up, for they cannot abide in the world, because they have been defiled by the idols of the Amorites. I will command another angel, and he will take for me twelve stones from that place from which these seven were taken. When you find them on the top of the mountain where you will place these others [to be removed], you will take them and set them on the ephod opposite the twelve stones that Moses in the wilderness set on the breastplate and you will consecrate them according to the twelve tribes. . .” [When Kenaz finds the twelve stones, the narrator describes the nature of each stone (e.g. “like sardius,” “like topaz”) and specifies the name of the tribe engraved on it. The list of stones corresponds to Exod. 28.17–20 and the names of the tribes are correlated with the stones as in Targum Neofiti to that passage.]

⁵ Both these texts use the phrase “the Paradise of righteousness,” which may indicate that “Paradise” alone was not yet a quasi-technical term for the Garden of Eden.

⁶ The Latin text is from Harrington *et al.* 1976, occasionally modified, and the English translations are my own, based on those of Daniel J. Harrington in Charlesworth 1983–85, 2.304–77, and Jacobson 1996, 89–194.

26.12–13: God said to Kenaz, “Take these stones and put them in the ark of the covenant of the Lord along with the tablets of the covenant that I gave to Moses on Horeb; and they will be there with them until Jahel [*Itiel?* = *Solomon*] will arise, who will build a house for my name, and then he will set them before me above the two cherubim, and they will be before me as a memorial for the house of Israel. ^[13]And when the sins of my people have reached full measure and their enemies begin to have power over their house, I will take these stones and the former stones along with the tablets, and I will put them back in the place from which they were brought at the beginning. And they will be there until I remember the world and visit the inhabitants of the earth. And then I will take these and many others, much better ones, from that place which the eye has not seen nor the ear heard and which has not entered into the human mind until such a thing comes to pass in the world. And the righteous will not need the light of the sun or the brightness of the moon, for the light of those most precious stones will be their light.”

Both the set of seven stones that adorned the idols of the Amorites and the set of twelve that Kenaz is given to place in the ark come from the land of Havilah. According to Genesis 2 Pishon, one of the four rivers into which the river that flows out of Eden divides, “flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium (הַבְּדֵלִים; LXX ὁ ἄνθραξ) and onyx stone (הַיָּסָן הַשֹּׁהֵם; LXX ὁ λίθος ὁ πρᾶσινος) are there” (2.11–12). *Biblical Antiquities* 25.10 alludes to this text, not only in naming Havilah, but also in instancing the two precious stones. (The putative Greek version evidently understood הַבְּדֵלִים to be crystal (χρυσταλλινός, as the LXX of Num 11.7 does χρυσταλλός.) It may also be relevant that the idols of the Amorites were made of gold, although no connection is explicitly made with the gold of Havilah, mentioned prominently in Genesis.

Pseudo-Philo evidently thinks either that Havilah is part of the Garden of Eden or that it is closely connected. Both sets of stones derived from Havilah therefore have supernatural qualities. Moreover, it seems to be Havilah that is described as “that place which the eye has not seen nor the ear heard and which has not entered into the human mind” (26.13),⁷ a formula adapted from Isaiah 64.4 but widely current in this form to describe the joys of the righteous in the future life.⁸

Ezekiel 28.13 provides a further reason for associating the twelve precious stones in *Biblical Antiquities* with paradise. In the MT it lists

⁷ Jacobson 1996, 775–76 emends the text so as to make this formula apply to the stones, not the place. But, in saying that “to make such a declaration about a place of which we are told nothing seems rhetorically impossible” (766), he misses the fact that the formula itself identifies the place as paradise.

⁸ See the collection of texts in Stone and Strugnell 1979, 42–73.

nine of the twelve precious stones which Exodus 28.17–20 places on the high priest's breastplate and which were duplicated by the second set of stones in *Bib. Ant.* 26.9–11. The LXX text of Ezekiel 28.13 lists all twelve. However this list originated (as a gloss?) in the text of Ezekiel, its presence could well have suggested to Jewish exegetes that the jewels of the breastplate must have derived from paradise. Precisely this is claimed by *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Exodus 35.27, which explains that the precious stones brought by the leaders of Israel for the ephod and the breastplate had been brought by the clouds of heaven from the river Pishon (cf. also *b. Yoma* 75a).⁹ Similarly, according to the Targum, the spices, oils, and incense for the tabernacle, mentioned in the next verse of Exodus, were brought by the clouds of heaven from the Garden of Eden. The parallelism makes clear that the Targum considers the source of the precious stones to be, if not in paradise itself, at least in close proximity to it. Elsewhere the same Targum (Exod. 14.9; Num. 33.8) has the Israelites at the Red Sea gathering pearls and precious stones that the river Pishon had carried from the Garden of Eden into the river Gihon and the latter had carried them into the Red Sea, where they were washed up on its shores. Perhaps this is intended to explain the origin of other jewels that went into the making of the tabernacle and its accoutrements.

In *Biblical Antiquities* 26.13 Pseudo-Philo explicitly alludes to the tradition that the precious stones of the high priest's breastplate, like the replica set that Kenaz was given by God, came from the region of paradise. God says, "I will take these stones *and the former stones* along with the tablets, and I will put them *back in the place from which they were brought at the beginning*." We know that the second set of stones came from Havilah, and so the first set, those on the high priest's breastplate, must also have come from Havilah. Evidently Pseudo-Philo's story of Kenaz and the precious stones is connected with, perhaps derived from the tradition found in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Exodus 35.27.

In the Targum it is clear that the place from which the precious stones came is on earth, since at Exodus 14.9 they are said to have been carried by rivers from the Garden of Eden to the shores of the Red Sea. In *Biblical Antiquities* the stones given to Kenaz are transported by an angel. In *Biblical Antiquities* 26.13 God says that at the time of the destruction of the Solomon's Temple he will take both sets of stones to the place from which they were first taken and keep them there until the end time. It

⁹ This interpretation is reached by taking מַעֲנַן to mean "clouds" (as in Prov. 25.14) as well as "princes": see *b. Yoma* 75a.

seems most natural to read this as referring to a paradise located on earth (though inaccessible to people) from Adam's time to the end, but it is not incompatible with the idea that paradise was removed from earth to the heavens after Adam and Eve were expelled from it. The stones would then be returned to paradise, now relocated in heaven.

26.8a: *Et fecit Deus eadem nocte sicuti dixit Cenez: precepit nubi, et iens accepit ros de lacu paradisi, et effundens illum super libros delevit eos. Et post hec venit angelus et combussit eos.*

That same night God did as he had said to Kenaz. He commanded a cloud, and it went and took dew from the lake of Paradise and poured it on the books and erased them. Afterwards an angel came and burned them.

The books to which this passage refers play a minor part in the story about the precious stones from Havilah. It is not entirely clear what they are, but they are connected with Amorite idolatry and have supernatural qualities. God had explained to Kenaz that they cannot "be erased by any water except that which has never served humans," and so promised to "command a cloud, and it will go and take dew and send it upon the books and erase what is written in them." After that God would send lightning to consume them (26.3). What the account of the fulfillment of these words in 26.8 adds is the source of the dew. The reading of the manuscripts is "dew from the ice (*glacie*) of Paradise," but it is hard to see either why there should be ice in paradise or how dew could be taken from it. So I propose correcting *glacie* to *lacu*. 3 *Baruch* 10 locates in the fourth heaven a lake from which the clouds receive water that becomes fruitful rain and "what is called the dew of heaven" (ἐκ τούτου ἐστὶν ὃ λέγεται δρόσος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, 10.9–10).¹⁰ It is not clear whether this is ordinary dew (which ancient people thought came from the sky) or a special sort of dew.¹¹ (The phrase "dew of heaven" is a biblical one, associated with fruitfulness in Gen. 27.28, 39 [cf. Deut. 33.28; Zech. 8.12], and is cited here as scriptural support for the idea that fruitful dew comes from the heavens.) The dew in *Biblical Antiquities* 26.8 is very special and unlikely to be the same as that to which 3 *Baruch* refers. What 26.3 may mean when it says that this dew "has never served humans" is that ordinary dew is recycled, somehow returning to its source, whereas the dew from paradise is pristine. That it comes from a lake in paradise makes very good sense, though I doubt if we

¹⁰ There is no reference to dew in the Slavonic version.

¹¹ Harlow 1996, 145 n. 120, 146, states that in 6.11 the phoenix feeds on "the dew of heaven," but on p. 135 he correctly cites this text as referring to "the dew of earth." There may be a case for emending 6.11 (since other sources do say that the phoenix feeds on the dew of heaven), but it is not what the extant text says.

should identify this with the Acherusian lake, which in Greek and early Christian sources serves to purify sinners in the other world (*Apoc. Mos.* 37.3; *Apoc. Pet.* 14.1; *Sib. Or.* 2.337–38; *Apoc. Paul* 22). But the parallel with 3 *Baruch* 10, as well as *Biblical Antiquities* 19.10 (see below), and other texts that speak of sources for rain and dew in the heavens,¹² shows that there would be no difficulty in supposing that Pseudo-Philo located paradise in the lower heavens, though the text is clearly also compatible with a location of paradise at the extremity of the earth.

In *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Exodus 35.27 clouds are said to have brought the precious stones from paradise. This idea is based on reading ענני to mean “clouds” (as in Prov. 25.14) as well as “princes.” So it would seem that this tradition is more original, and that Pseudo-Philo has borrowed the motif of the clouds from it. On the other hand, dew is more naturally carried by clouds than precious stones.

32.7b-8a: *Et tunc commoto fundamento, militie festinaverunt fulgura in cursus suos, et venti sonum reddiderunt de promptuariis suis, et terra mota est de firmamento suo, et tremuerunt montes et rupes in compaginibus suis, et nubes elevaverunt fluctus suos contra flammam ignis, ut non exurerent seculum.* ^[8]*Tunc expergefactus est abussus de venis suis, et omnes fluctus maris convenerunt in unum. Tunc paradisus reddita inspiratione fructus sui, et cedri Libani moti sunt de radicibus suis, et bestie campi commote sunt in habitationibus silvarum, et omnia opera eius convenerunt simul, ut viderent testamentum disponentem Dominum ad filios Israel.*

And then, when the foundation [of the world] was moved,
the heavenly hosts speeded the lightnings on their courses,
and the winds sounded from their storehouses,
and the earth was shaken from its firmament,
and the mountains and cliffs trembled in their structures,
and the clouds lifted up their floods against the flame of fire so that it would
not consume the world.

^[8]Then the abyss was stirred up from its springs,
and all the waves of the sea gathered together.
Then Paradise, giving off the scent of its fruit,
and the cedars of Lebanon were shaken from their roots,¹³
and the animals of the field were moved in their dwelling places in the forests,
and all his creatures came together to see the Lord establishing a covenant
with the children of Israel.

This passage occurs in Pseudo-Philo's rewriting of the song of Deborah (32.1–17) and is a much expanded version of Judges 5.4–5, interpreted as

¹² See Bauckham 1998, 316–17.

¹³ Jacobson 1996, 877–78, correctly argued that the Latin text must mean that both paradise and the cedars of Lebanon were shaken, and, moreover, that this suits the context, since otherwise paradise would be alone in this list in not being shaken.

referring to the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. A similar account of the cosmic disturbance created by the revelation occurs in 11.5:

And behold the mountains burned with fire,
and the earth trembled,
and the hills shook,
and the mountains tottered,
and the abysses boiled,
and all the habitable world was moved,
and the heavens folded up,
and the clouds drew up water,
and flames of fire burned,
and thunder and lightning abounded,
and winds and storms roared,
and the stars gathered together,
and angels ran ahead...

There are also parallel descriptions in rabbinic midrashim, but *Biblical Antiquities* 32.8 seems to be the only one to mention paradise.¹⁴ There is an order to the list of phenomena in 32.7b–8a. Those in verse 7b elaborate the phenomena in Judges 5.4–5 (“the earth trembled, and the heavens poured, the clouds indeed poured water, the mountains quaked...”), as seems also to be the case in 11.5. In 32.8 the list of phenomena is further extended by focusing on two other aspects of the cosmos: seas and forests. The sweet-smelling fruit trees of paradise¹⁵ come first as the most eminent of all trees, then the cedars of Lebanon, regularly cited in the Bible as the greatest known trees, and then the forest animals. Perhaps the inclusion of both these categories of phenomena was inspired by Psalm 29.3–6, 9, which could easily be read as referring to the revelation at Sinai.¹⁶

The reference to paradise along with the cedars of Lebanon and the wild animals of the forests might suggest that paradise must be on earth, but this is not necessarily the case. The whole description makes clear that the heavens, the earth and the abyss were all shaken by the cosmic event on Sinai. It could be that paradise is cited as the forest in the heavens, just as the abyss is the waters under the earth.

19.10, 12–13: *Tunc ostendit ei Dominus terram et omnia que sunt in ea et dixit: Hec est terra quam dabo populo meo. Et ostendit ei locum unde eleuant nubes aquam ad irrigandum omnem terram, et locum unde accipit fluvius irrigationem, et terram*

¹⁴ Jacobson 1996, 878.

¹⁵ For the exceptional fragrance of the fruit trees in paradise, see 1 *Enoch* 32.4 (Ethiopic); 2 *Enoch* 8.2; 3 *Enoch* 23.18; *Apoc. Pet.* 16.2; 5 *Ezra* 2.12; *Coptic Apocalypse of Paul* (Budge, p. 1080); *Hist. Rech.* 3.6; *Num. Rab.* 13.2.

¹⁶ Cf. Jacobson 1996, 878.

Egipti et locum firmamenti unde bibet sola terra sancta. Et ostendit ei locum unde pluit manna populo usque ad semitas paradysi. Et ostendit ei mensuras sanctuarii et numerum oblationum et signa in quibus incipiant inspicere celum. Et dixit: Hec sunt que prohibita sunt generi hominum quoniam peccaverunt sibi. . . .^[12]Te autem accipiam inde et dormificabo¹⁷ te cum patribus tuis, et requiem dabo tibi in dormitione tua, et sepeliam te cum pace. Et lugebunt te omnes angeli, et milicie contristabuntur. Nullus autem angelorum nec hominum sciet sepulchrum tuum in quo incipies sepeliri, donec visitem seculum. Et excitabo te et patres tuos de terra Egipti in qua dormietis, et venietis simul et habitabitis inhabitationem immortalem que non tenetur in tempore.^[13]Seculum¹⁸ autem hoc erit in conspectus meo tanquam nebula currens et tanquam dies transiens hesternus. Et erit cum appropinquavero¹⁹ visitare orbem iubebo annis et precipiam temporibus et breviabuntur et accelerabuntur astra, et festinabit lumen solis in occasum, et non permanebit lumen lune; quoniam festinabo excitare vos dormientes, ut quem ostendi tibi locum sanctificationis in eo habitent omnes qui possunt vivere.

Then the Lord showed him [Moses] the land and all that is in it, and said, "This is the land that I will give to my people." He showed him the place from which the clouds draw up water to water the whole earth, and the place from which the river takes its water, and the land of Egypt, and the place in the firmament from which only the holy land drinks. And he showed him the place from which he rained down manna upon the people, as far as the paths of paradise. He showed him the measurements of the sanctuary and the number of the sacrifices and signs by which people will interpret the heaven. And he said, "These are what have been denied to the human race because they sinned against me.²⁰ . . .^[12] Now I will take you from here and lay you down to sleep with your fathers, and I will give you rest in your resting place and bury you in peace. All the angels will mourn over you, and the heavenly hosts will grieve. But no angel nor human will know your sepulchre in which you are to be buried until I visit the world. I will raise up you and your fathers from the earth²¹ in which you sleep and you will come together and dwell in the eternal dwelling place that is not subject to time.^[13] But this world will be in my eyes like a fleeting cloud and like yesterday that has passed. And when I draw near to visit the world, I will command the years and order the times and they will be shortened, and the stars will speed up and the light of the sun will hurry to set and the light of the moon will not abide; for I will hasten to raise up you who are sleeping in order that all who will live will dwell in the place of the sanctuary that I showed you."

19.10 is an expansion of Deuteronomy 34.1–4, according to which God showed Moses the promised land from the top of Mount Nebo before he

¹⁷ Jacobson 1996, 641 is probably correct in preferring this reading.

¹⁸ The manuscripts have *celum*, but Jacobson 1996, 643–44 is probably correct in arguing that this is a corruption of *seculum*.

¹⁹ Jacobson 1996, 644 prefers this reading to *appropinquaverit*.

²⁰ Both Jacobson and Harrington correct *sibi* to *mihi*. This is likely correct in view of the parallel in 13.9.

²¹ Jacobson 1996, 642–43 argues convincingly that *Egipti* must be a textual error.

died. *Biblical Antiquities* has turned this into a revelation of the secrets of the heavens, somewhat similar to those described at length in such works as the Enochic literature and 3 *Baruch*. It has some material in common with 2 *Baruch* 59.4–11, a similarly summary account of what God showed Moses, but in this case at the time of the revelation on Sinai.²² Significantly, the list of revealed things in 2 *Baruch* also includes paradise (2 *Bar.* 59.8), though the interest there is in its size (as in 1 *Enoch* 70.3; cf. 2 *Bar.* 51.11). Other items in 2 *Baruch* 59.4–11 which parallel those in *Biblical Antiquities* 19.10 are “the likeness of Zion with its measurements” and “the number of offerings,” items that would seem more appropriate at Sinai than at Nebo. The reference in *Biblical Antiquities* 19.10 to the land of Egypt is probably a textual error: perhaps, as Jacobson suggests, the original text spoke, in the preceding phrase, of “the place from which the river of Egypt takes its water.”²³ All the other places that God here shows Moses (subsequent to the sight of the promised land) are plausibly located in the lower heavens.

Our interest here is in “the paths of Paradise,” a phrase that occurs also in *Biblical Antiquities* 13.9.²⁴ It is difficult to decide whether the reference is to paths within paradise or to paths into paradise. A similar phrase, unfortunately missing in the Latin text, in 4 *Ezra* 4.7 evidently refers to entrances to paradise, featured as one of the secrets of creation that cannot be known to a human being without special revelation.²⁵ The context in 4 *Ezra* (see 4.8: “nor did I enter Paradise”) requires a reference to ways into paradise, and the close affinity between 4 *Ezra* and *Biblical Antiquities* makes it very likely that the phrase is used in the same sense in both works. It may well allude to Genesis 3.24, where cherubim with flaming swords are placed at the entrance of the Garden of Eden “to guard the way to the tree of life.” The “way” here can be understood as the path that leads through the entrance of paradise to the tree of life, though it might also be taken to be a path within paradise that leads to the tree of life. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* evidently reads Genesis 3.24 in this latter sense, but interestingly parallels the plural “ways” or “paths” that we find in *Biblical Antiquities* and 4 *Ezra*: “The Law is better for him that toils in it than the fruit of the tree of life, (that law) which the Memra of the Lord

²² For a fuller discussion, see Bauckham 1998, 60–66. ²³ Jacobson 1996, 635.

²⁴ In 13.9 the phrase is *vias paradysi*, in 19.10 *semitas paradysi*.

²⁵ Stone 1990, 78, 84. Stone prefers the Armenian and Georgian versions, which have “the entrances to Paradise,” to the Syriac and Ethiopic, which have “the paths of Paradise.” The context certainly requires that the reference be to ways into paradise (cf. 4.8: “nor did I enter paradise”).

established so that people might endure and walk in the paths of the way of life in the world to come.”²⁶

The significance of the phrase “as far as (*usque ad*) the paths of Paradise” is not very clear. Perhaps it indicates that Moses’ tour of the lower heavens ended at the entrances to paradise, while the three additional items were revealed subsequently. We have already noticed that “the measurements of the sanctuary and the number of the sacrifices” would seem to be more appropriate to the revelation at Sinai than in the present context, and it may be that they, together with “and signs by which people will interpret the heaven,” are a gloss. This would make much better sense of the words of God that follow: “These are what have been denied to the human race because they sinned against me.” These words are hard to understand in relation to the measurements of the sanctuary, the number of the sacrifices, and the signs in heaven (the zodiac?), but make excellent sense with reference to “the paths of Paradise.” There would then be a close parallel in *Biblical Antiquities* 13.9.

It is just possible that Moses’ tour of the lower heavens, summarized in this passage, ended at the eastern extremity of the earth, where paradise was located on earth, but it would seem more probable that this passage situates paradise (the one to which Genesis 2–3 refer) in the heavens.

What concerns us in God’s prophecy of Moses’ personal future after death (19.12–13)²⁷ is the identity of the place that is called both “the eternal dwelling place that is not subject to time” (19.12) and “the place of the sanctuary that I showed you” (19.13). Both phrases describe the dwelling place of the righteous after the resurrection. The words “that I showed you” in the second case make it virtually certain that the reference is to the paradise whose paths God has shown to Moses in 19.10 (and on an earlier occasion also in 13.9). Such a reference also makes good sense in light of God’s words at the end of the revelation to Moses in 19.10: “These are what have been denied to the human race because they sinned against me.” Paradise, forbidden to humans when they sinned, will be reopened for the righteous after the resurrection.

The description “the eternal dwelling place that is not subject to time” may seem surprising if what is in view is the paradise of Genesis 2–3, but “not subject to time” (*que non tenetur in tempore*) should probably not be taken in the metaphysical sense of a timeless eternity, but in the sense of “unchangeable.” Paradise, not corruptible like the rest of the created

²⁶ Translation from Maher 1992, 31.

²⁷ The passage looks like an expanded version of the personal eschatological message to Daniel in Dan. 12.13.

world, has not changed since Adam and Eve left it, and it still contains the tree of life that will bestow immortality on those who enter it after the resurrection (cf. 4 *Ezra* 8.52; *T. Levi* 18.10–11). In 4 *Ezra* 7.123 Ezra refers to paradise “whose fruit remains unspoiled.”

In the phrase “the place of the sanctuary” (*locum sanctificationis*: 19.13), the Latin *sanctificatio* doubtless has the sense of “sanctuary,” attested elsewhere in Jewish and Christian Latin (*Biblical Antiquities* 11.15; *Jub.* 30.15–16; 32.23; 49.16, 17, 18; 4 *Ezra* 10.21; 12.48). It is used in the sense of the Greek ἀγίασμα translating Hebrew מִקְדָּשׁ (e.g. Ps. 95[96]:6, where Vulgate has *sanctificatio*). Isaiah 60.13 has the phrase “the place of my sanctuary” (מִקְדָּשׁ מִקְדָּשׁ, τὸν τόπον τὸν ἁγίον) with reference to the eschatological Zion. The verse reads:

The glory of Lebanon shall come to you,
the cypress, the plane and the pine,
to beautify the place of my sanctuary;
and I will glorify where my feet rest
(Isa. 60.13, NRSV)

It is possible that “the place of the sanctuary” in *Biblical Antiquities* 19.13 is actually an allusion to this biblical passage, where the references to trees may have suggested that the place is paradise (cf. Ezek. 31.8). In any case, the phrase in *Biblical Antiquities* 19.13 envisages paradise as a holy place, because God dwells in (*Jub.* 8.19) or at least visits it. The nearest parallel is probably the *Book of Jubilees*, which treats the paradise of Genesis as a temple²⁸ (cf. also 4Q265 7.2.14).

13.8–10a: *Tunc precepit ei de anno vite Noe et dixit ad eum: Hi sunt anni quos disposui post ebdomadas in quibus visitavi civitatem hominum, in quo tempore ostendi eis locum generationis at colubrum.*²⁹ *Et dixit: Hic locus est quem docui protoplastum dicens: Si non transgredieris que tibi mandavi, omnia sub te erunt. Ille autem transgressus est vias meas, et suasus est de muliere sua: et hec seducta est de colubro. Et tunc constituta est mors in generationes hominum.* ^[9]*Et adiecit Dominus adhuc ostendere vias paradysi, et dixit ei: Hec sunt vie quas perdiderunt homines, non ambulantes in eis, quoniam peccaverunt in me.* ^[10]*Et precepit ei Dominus de salvatione animarum populi et dixit: Si in viis meis ambulaverunt, non relinquam eos sed miserebor eis semper et benedicam semen eorum, et festinabit terra dare fructum suum, et pluvial erit eis in lucrificationem et non sterilizabit. Sciens autem scio quoniam corrumpent vias suas et relinquam eos. . . .*

Then he [God] instructed him [Moses] about the year of the life of Noah, and he said to him, “These are the years that I ordained after the weeks in which I

²⁸ See especially van Ruiten 1999.

²⁹ The manuscripts have *colorem*. Harrington corrects to *colubrum*, which occurs later in the verse.

visited the city of humans, at which time I showed them the place of creation and the serpent." And he said, "This is the place concerning which I taught the first-fashioned one, saying, 'If you do not transgress what I have commanded you, all things will be subject to you.' But that one transgressed my ways and was persuaded by his wife; and she was deceived by the serpent. And then death was ordained for the generations of humans."^[9] The Lord proceeded to show him the ways of paradise and said to him, "These are the ways that humans have lost by not walking in them, because they sinned against me."^[10] And the Lord commanded him concerning the welfare of the lives of the people and said, "If they walk in my ways, I will not abandon them but will have mercy on them always and bless their sowing; and the earth will hasten to yield its fruit, and the rain will be to their profit, and the earth will not be barren. But I surely know that they will corrupt their ways and I will abandon them. . ."

This passage follows one in which God instructs Moses about sacrifices and festivals. Jacobson justifiably says of the first part of 13.8: "The whole section is a locus desperatus."³⁰ The only important point for our discussion is that the place being discussed is the Garden of Eden of Genesis 2–3. 13.9 is very close to 19.10, which we have already discussed. It confirms that the paradise of 19.10 is the paradise of Genesis 2–3. The interesting new element is the statement that humans have lost the ways into paradise (or the ways within paradise?) "by not walking in them."³¹ As Jacobson comments, "The language and the picture have moved imperceptibly from concrete and literal to metaphoric. The 'ways of Paradise' have gone from being an actual place to being a way of life, a standard of behaviour."³² The metaphorical use is then picked up in 13.10, which apparently implies that if only the people walked in the Lord's ways something like the paradisaical fruitfulness of the earth would be restored here and now.³³ Connecting this text with the earlier part of chapter 13, Robert Hayward comments that it

seems to suggest that God's ways are now available to men [*sic*] in the commands given to Moses, particularly those relating to the cult; if men keep these ways, the earth will be fruitful, the rains will be beneficial, and the earth will not be barren. It would therefore seem as if, in some measure the cult provides those *ways* of God which, should they be observed, might undo Adam's curse and lead men [*sic*] to the ways of Paradise which Adam lost, incurring thereby for the earth a curse and a legacy of thorns and thistles.³⁴

³⁰ Jacobson 1996, 519.

³¹ This would seem to be the most likely meaning of the participial phrase *non ambulantes in eis*. Perhaps there is an allusion to Gen. 3.24: "the way to the tree of life."

³² Jacobson 1996, 522.

³³ Since the metaphorical use of "ways" occurs in verses 8 and 10, it is possible that the whole of 13.9 is a gloss, drawing on 19.10.

³⁴ Hayward 1992, 6.

11.15: *Et ibi ei mandavit multa, et ostendit ei lignum vite de quo abscidit et accepit et misit in Myrram, et dulcis facta est aqua Myrre. Et sequebatur eos in heremo annis quadraginta, et ascendit in montem cum eis et descendit in campos.*

And there [on Mount Sinai] he [God] commanded him [Moses] many things, and showed him the tree of life, from which he cut off [a piece] and took [it] and threw [it] into Marah, and the water of Marah became sweet. And it [the water] followed them in the wilderness forty years and went up onto the mountain with them and went down into the plains.

This is a version of Exodus 15.25, relocated to the period of forty days that Moses spent on Mount Sinai (Exod. 24.18). The reason for the revision of the biblical chronology³⁵ is that it enables Moses to take the wood with which the bitter waters of Marah were made sweet (and therefore life-giving) from the tree of life in paradise. Presupposed is the tradition, given in detail in 2 *Baruch* 59.3–11, that on Mount Sinai God revealed to Moses all kinds of secrets of the heavens, including paradise (2 *Bar.* 59.8). The link thus forged between paradise and God's gifts to Israel in the wilderness parallels the case of the precious stones of the ephod, which were said to have been brought from the Garden of Eden. As we have seen, Pseudo-Philo alludes to this latter tradition in 26.13. Pseudo-Philo extends the theme further by identifying the waters of Marah, made sweet by a branch of the tree of life, with the well of water that henceforth followed the Israelites throughout the forty years of their wanderings in the wilderness.

The notion that the wood thrown into the water at Marah was from the tree of life is also attested by Philo (*Migr.* 36–37), in a passage where he allegorizes the tree as virtue, from which immortality derives, but evidently depends on the literal version of the tradition, such as we find in Pseudo-Philo. Rather similarly, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Exodus 15.25 interprets the tree as the Law (often compared to the tree of life in Jewish tradition) and the branch as a commandment of the Law, which God gave to Moses at Marah, according to Exodus 15.25b.

CONCLUSION

Pseudo-Philo's brief references to paradise evidently take for granted ideas about it that are known to his implied readers and do not need to be fully expounded.³⁶ This makes it difficult to be sure about some of the features of

³⁵ Jacobson 1996, 478, argues that the event at Marah has been connected with Sinai by means of *gezerah shawa* (Exod. 15.25: "a statute and an ordinance"; Deut. 5.31: "the statutes and the ordinances"). This may be an additional reason for the connection.

³⁶ Hayward 1992, 20.

paradise in *Biblical Antiquities*. What is clear is that there is only one paradise. It is the paradise in which Adam and Eve lived and which was lost to humans because of their sin. But it has been preserved and will become the dwelling place of the righteous after their resurrection from the dead. Its location is more difficult to determine. It may be that Pseudo-Philo is not consistent about this, making use of some traditions that located paradise at the eastern extremity of the earth (like *1 Enoch* 32) and others that relocated it in the lower heavens (like Paul in 2 Cor. 12.2–4). If the various references to paradise in *Biblical Antiquities* are to be understood as fully consistent, then most likely it is located in the heavens. This would probably entail the view, expressed in *2 Baruch* 4.3–6, that, when Adam and Eve sinned, paradise was removed from the earth in order to be preserved with God in heaven until it is revealed to the righteous after the resurrection (*2 Bar.* 51.11).

*Paradise, gardens, and the afterlife
in the first century CE*

Martin Goodman

When contemporary rabbinic Jews think of the fate of the deceased righteous, they like to imagine them enjoying eternal life in the Garden of Eden,¹ a notion already attested in the targumim in late antiquity.² But although the historian Josephus referred in his *Jewish Antiquities* to the garden (*kèpos*) to which Adam and Eve were brought just after the creation of the world as a *paradeisos* (*Ant.* 1.37), using the same term for Eden as the Septuagint translators of Genesis (LXX Gen. 2.8), he made no reference in any of his works to a Jewish hope for a future existence there. The later rabbinic notion presumably did not spring from a vacuum, and the silence of Josephus therefore bears examination.

That *paradeisos* could refer in Josephus' day to more than either just a normal park or the primordial Garden of Eden is clear from the use of the term in the New Testament, where it bears at least three other connotations. One of these relates directly to paradise as the place where some will go after death, for Jesus is portrayed by Luke as reassuring one of the thieves crucified next to him that "today you will be with me in the *paradeisos*" (Luke 23.43). Perhaps different is the notion behind the claim in 2 Corinthians by Paul, when he was "caught up to the third heaven," that he "was caught up to paradise and heard things that are not to be told" (2 Cor. 12.2, 4). Different again may be the eschatological promise in Revelation, that the Spirit says: "To everyone who conquers, I will give permission to eat of the tree of life that is in the paradise of God" (Rev. 2.7).

All three of these ways of talking about paradise are to be found in Jewish literature from antiquity, but establishing more precisely the date of composition of the relevant passages in these Jewish texts is not always beyond doubt. Slavonic Enoch has the eschatological notion that, "when

¹ Delumeau 1995.

² Targum to Isa. 45.7 (eternal life for the righteous in *Gan Eden*); Targum to Zech. 2.14–4.7 (the righteous and humble ones will live in *Gan Eden* forever). I owe these references to William Smelik.

the whole creation comes to an end," the righteous will be found "in the Great Paradise" (2 *En.* 65.6, 10), but neither the date nor the Jewish authorship of this part of 2 *Enoch* is certain,³ and the same is true of similar eschatological ideas found in the *Testament of Dan* (5.12). Slavonic Enoch also has a reference to paradise as located in the Third Heaven (2 *En.* 8). More firmly dated to a pre-Christian Jewish context is the reference in *Jubilees* to Enoch being carried alive by angels to the Garden of Eden, envisaged as between heaven and earth (*Jub.* 4.23). But for the notion of an immediate post-mortem existence in paradise, as envisaged in Luke's portrayal of Jesus, the only (rather shaky) parallel is in the *Testament of Abraham*, in which God says: "Take my friend Abraham to Paradise, where are the tents of the righteous ones. . . There is no toil there, no grief, no sighing, but peace and rejoicing, and endless life" (20.18–19); and the *Testament of Abraham* is a text probably with numerous Christian interpolations and of uncertain date, since there are no certain witnesses to it before the Middle Ages.⁴

If Luke's notion that the dead go straight to paradise was at all common among Jews in his time, and if what Luke had in mind bore any relation to the gardens called *paradeisoi* by his contemporaries, the failure of Josephus to pick up the idea would be particularly odd because he was writing in the city of Rome, where gardens, and images of gardens, held a special place in the cultivation of leisure and the pursuit of enjoyment. The great imperial gardens, open to the public, had in many cases been inherited from great Republican senators like Lucullus,⁵ and some emperors made a point of spending much of their time in these gardens: for Vespasian, who "for the most part lived in the Horti Sallustiani," it was a way of emphasizing his accessibility to his subjects while enjoying the delights of nature.⁶ Vespasian may in part have been reacting against what was seen in his day as the gross megalomania of Nero's Golden House, a palace which extended all the way from the Palatine Hill to the Esquiline, and which domesticated within the edifice "tracts of country, varied by tilled fields, vineyards, pastures and weeds, with great numbers of wild and domestic animals."⁷ As the elder Pliny, contemporary of both Nero and Vespasian remarked, the modern fashion, for those who could afford it, was to "possess the luxury of farms and villas within the city itself," a practice introduced originally at Athens by the philosopher Epicurus, who was *otii*

³ Schürer 1973–87, 3.746–50 favors the hypothesis of Jewish authorship but refers to a series of other possible theories. See now more fully Davila 2005.

⁴ On the *Testament of Abraham*, see Schürer 1973–87, 3.761–67. ⁵ Plutarch, *Lucullus* 39.2.

⁶ Dio Cassius 66.10.4. ⁷ Suetonius, *Nero* 31.1.

magister ("master of leisure").⁸ Such pleasure gardens remained even under imperial rule one area of life in which – probably because gardens evoked withdrawal from public life rather than political engagement – the emperors permitted competition between senatorial aristocrats to continue even in the capital city.⁹ Archaeological evidence, preserved by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE, for gardens in Pompeii show that in this respect, as in many others, the fashion of the capital percolated to the Italian municipalities¹⁰ – with the difference that the Pompeian paradise, created on a much smaller scale, often evoked the delights of nature by combining a real garden with paintings of animals cohabiting (usually in harmony), as in the wall picture of a *paradeisos* from the House of Romulus and Remus, in which a snake is depicted coiled round a tree, with an elephant, bull, mule, lion, fox, and bear all living happily together,¹¹ or in the *paradeisos* picture from the House of M. Lucretius Fronto, in which a bear is depicted resting in the shade of a tree, eating fruit.¹²

This Roman taste for luxurious gardens was adopted with ease by provincials in the eastern Mediterranean, where Hellenistic kings had long seen themselves as inheritors of the tradition of oriental parks and people recalled with admiration the hanging gardens of Babylon and the Achaemenid paradise of palace and gardens at Pasargadae.¹³ The park, with its famous grave of cypress trees, at Daphne near Antioch, originally dedicated by Seleucus I with a temple to Apollo and Artemis, was enlarged by Pompey in the mid first century BCE, and became a favorite pleasure ground of the city's inhabitants.¹⁴ It is all the more striking that the Jews of Jerusalem, despite their willingness to adopt contemporary Roman styles of architecture and (with the omission of figurative art) of painting,¹⁵ did not also seek to create gardens.

The reason for this failure was evidently not ignorance. Josephus, at least, knew about the hanging gardens of Babylon, to which he referred (citing Berossus) in *Against Apion*.¹⁶ More importantly, the classic Roman-style

⁸ Pliny, *Natural History* 19.19.51. ⁹ See Beard 1998.

¹⁰ On the gardens, see Jashemski 1979; Ciarallo 2001, 2007; on the percolation of fashions from the capital see Zanker 1988.

¹¹ Jashemski 1979, 69. ¹² Jashemski 1979, 71.

¹³ On Hellenistic royal gardens, especially in Judaea and the vicinity, see Carroll-Spillecke 1989 and Bedal 2004, esp. 121–69.

¹⁴ On Daphne, see Downey 1961, 82–86 and *passim*.

¹⁵ On architecture, see Roller 1998; on wall painting in Jerusalem, see Avigad 1984, ch. 3; on the attitude of late Second Temple Jews to the Greco-Roman visual heritage in general, see Fine 2005, ch. 6.

¹⁶ Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.141.

garden created by Herod in his Jerusalem palace was described by Josephus as one of the wonders of the first-century city:

All around were many circular cloisters, leading one into another, the columns in each being different, and their open courts all of greensward; there were groves of various trees intersected by long walks, which were bordered by deep canals, and ponds everywhere studded with bronze figures, through which the water was discharged, and around the streams were numerous cots for tame pigeons.¹⁷

Josephus ended his description with a lament: "It is impossible adequately to delineate the palace, and the memory of it is harrowing, recalling as it does the ravages of the brigands' fire."¹⁸ Excavations at Jericho reveal that such gardens were a feature of Herodian palaces where the water-supply permitted.¹⁹ And so it is all the more striking that intensive investigation by garden archaeologists in Judaea has failed to spot any evidence for the spread of this taste into the wider population: "A surprising find is the clear lack of gardens in the main courtyards of urban private houses of the Roman period."²⁰ As Rona-Shani Evyasaf rightly notes, "the wealth demonstrated by some of the . . . houses . . . and the presence of water pools show that neither money nor lack of water were restricting factors; the choice was probably cultural."²¹ Although there was no objection among Jews to the depiction of foliage, as is evident from Josephus' enthusiastic descriptions of the golden vine with grape-clusters found in the Temple,²² an object mentioned also by Tacitus,²³ nothing like the Pompeian depictions of paradise was apparently to be found in Jerusalem.

So perhaps it is not as surprising as it appeared at first sight that the image of paradise as the post-mortem reward of the virtuous is not to be found in Josephus' quite numerous discussions of Jewish ideas about life after death. In the general description of Jewish theology to be found in the second book of *Against Apion*, Josephus wrote (of all Jews) that "to those who observe the laws . . . God has granted a renewed existence and in the revolution of the ages the gift of a better life."²⁴ In his *Antiquities*,

¹⁷ Josephus, *Jewish War* 5.180–81 (Loeb translation).

¹⁸ *Jewish War* 5.182.

¹⁹ On the gardens at Jericho, see Netzer 2001–04, 1.92–100, 128–39.

²⁰ Evyasaf 2006, 203–04.

²¹ Evyasaf 2006, 204. I am grateful to Rona Evyasaf for sending me this study and for further bibliographic guidance on Hellenistic gardens.

²² Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 15.395; *Jewish War* 5.210. Note also the golden vine, described by Strabo as "either a vine or a garden" and called *terpole* ("delight"), which Aristobulus sent to Pompey in 63 BCE and which Strabo saw set up in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.34–36).

²³ Tacitus, *Histories* 5.5. ²⁴ Josephus, *Against Apion* 2.218.

he asserted specifically that the Pharisees “believe that souls have power to survive death and that there are rewards and punishments under the earth,”²⁵ although in *Jewish War* he put into his own mouth (in his speech at Jotapata urging the immorality of suicide) the notion that souls are immortal, and that the souls of the good “remaining spotless and obedient, are allotted the most holy place in heaven, whence, in the revolution of the ages, they return to find in chaste bodies a new habitation.”²⁶ The sophists Judas and Matthias who implored their youthful students to tear down the golden eagle that had been placed by Herod over the great gate of the Temple urged that it was noble to die on behalf of the ancestral law: “for the souls of those who came to such an end attained immortality and an eternally abiding sense of felicity.”²⁷ Josephus even continued to claim that the belief of the Essenes that “for virtuous souls there is reserved an abode beyond the ocean, a place which is not oppressed by rain or snow or heat, but is refreshed by the ever gentle breath of the west wind coming in from the ocean”²⁸ was the same as the Greek notion of the isles of the blessed which were set apart for the brave.²⁹ The opportunity to refer to this Essene doctrine concerning the soul, “whereby they irresistibly attract all who have once tasted their philosophy,”³⁰ as referring to paradise, seems almost wilfully to be missed.

So how to explain Josephus’ reticence about the Jewish hope, found in the Gospel of his contemporary Luke, to leave this life for a better one in the perfect surroundings of a natural paradise? For Josephus, who wrote in Rome at least in part for a Roman gentile readership, it is tempting to seek a Roman reason for what he wrote: perhaps memories of Nero’s Golden House tarnished images of paradises created purely for pleasure (which might help also to make sense of the moralizing of the elder Pliny, in the section of his *Natural History* devoted to gardens, about the decline of contemporaries from the olden days, when gardens were cultivated for produce and were a place for work rather than ease).³¹ But the lack of leisure gardens in Jerusalem, outside the Herodian palace, encourages a search for a Jewish explanation. It seems that this Roman custom was no more popular with the citizens of the city than the wild beast fights and other entertainments that Herod attempted, with striking lack of success, to introduce to Jerusalem at the start of his rule.³²

²⁵ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.14. ²⁶ Josephus, *Jewish War* 3.372, 374.

²⁷ Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.650. ²⁸ Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.155.

²⁹ Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.156. ³⁰ Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.158.

³¹ Pliny, *Natural History* 19.19; on ambivalence about Nero’s Golden House, see Purcell 1987.

³² Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 15.267–91.

Perhaps what lay behind Josephus' reticence was a lurking Jewish suspicion that too much enthusiasm for nature might lead too easily to idolatry, a notion that Pliny, who noted that there is "a certain sense of sanctity (*religio quaedam*) attached to a garden" would have recognized (though without sympathy).³³ Whatever the Psalmist wrote about being like a green olive tree in the house of God in the time of the First Temple (Ps. 52.8), one of the more remarkable features of the Jerusalem Temple was its lack of any plant or sacred grove.³⁴ Philo in the mid first century CE asserted that there were many reasons for this lack of vegetation (of which the least convincing was his last, a concern that dense thickets might provide cover for attacks by malefactors).³⁵ Philo's first three reasons seem less specious:

first, because the temple which is truly holy does not seek to provide pleasure and hours of easy enjoyment but the austerity of religion; secondly, because the means used to promote the verdure of trees being the excrements of men and irrational animals, cannot be brought in there without profanity; thirdly, because the plants of the wild kind of vegetation are of no use, but only, as the poets say, "a burden to the soil," while those of the cultivated variety which produce fruits of the same quality will distract the weak minded from the solemnity of the sacred rites.³⁶

Underlying such a Jewish suspicion of nature might be a concern – fully justified in the polytheistic world of the Roman empire³⁷ – that appreciation of nature could all too easily degenerate into idolatrous worship: whatever the original connotation of the *asherah* which Jews are forbidden in Deuteronomy to plant beside the altar where they worship (Deut. 16.21), by the end of the second century CE Rabbi Shimon could be reported in the Mishnah as interpreting the prohibition in light of an assumption that any tree was liable to be the object of veneration by pagan idolaters (*m. 'Abod. Zar.* 2.7). Since for Greeks and Romans the world was indeed populated by innumerable hamadryads, representing the spirits of trees, such paranoia was not without justification.³⁸

But against any such general suspicion of nature was the long Jewish tradition, enshrined in the Bible, and especially in the Song of Songs, of a deep appreciation of the delights of gardens,³⁹ and a simpler explanation of Josephus' reticence about the notion of paradise when he expatiated on Jewish beliefs about the fate of the righteous after death would be that the idea first attested in Luke's Gospel was not yet common among Jews. It is not of course obvious that anyone should imagine that the original site of

³³ Pliny, *Natural History* 19.19.50. ³⁴ Josephus, *Against Apion* 1.199.

³⁵ Philo, *On the Special Laws* 1.75. ³⁶ Philo, *On the Special Laws* 1.74 (Loeb translation).

³⁷ See Hopkins 1999. ³⁸ On hamadryads, see Gödde 2004. ³⁹ Landy 2009.

the creation of humanity should also be considered the best place for post-mortem existence. Luke would not have derived the idea from any gentile source. Since the notion was (as we have seen) to resurface later in rabbinic Judaism (which will not have been influenced by Luke), it is a reasonable hypothesis that in this case the New Testament provides evidence of a Jewish concept still in its infancy, and that it was only later that it became widespread.

CHAPTER 6

Paradise in the New Testament

Grant Macaskill

There are only three occurrences of the word “paradise” in the New Testament: Luke 23.43, 2 Corinthians 12.4, and Revelation 2.7. Of these, only the last is elaborated by any kind of description of the place (as it is developed in Revelation 22.1–5). Given the relative prominence of paradise in later Christian writings, the brevity of this list of texts is surprising and forces us to consider how the New Testament may have functioned in the development of Christian paradise traditions. Did the Church ignore or fail to understand the seemingly marginal nature of paradise expectation in the New Testament, or did it recognize wider theological themes lying behind these few texts that gave them a greater significance?

The eventual canonical location of the description in Revelation 22.1–5, of course, accords its hope for paradise a certain prominence. Alongside this, though, is the fact that while paradise itself is seldom mentioned in the New Testament, its first occupants – Adam and Eve – are found more widely.¹ In one case, these figures are mentioned purely for paraenetic purposes,² and the idea of paradise is present only insofar as it is the assumed location of the temptation story. In other texts, however, the person and work of Christ are understood in relation to the story of Adam’s fall – a story that, of course, involved the cursing of the earth and the expulsion of the first couple from paradise. This “Adam Christology” arguably permeates Paul’s thought far more widely than just those parts of his writings where Adam is mentioned explicitly. Given that Christ’s work is construed in these terms, as a reversal of the cursedness of Adam, the hope of salvation may also naturally be understood as including a recovery of the paradisiacal state.

¹ There are explicit references to Adam and/or Eve in Roms 5.12–21; 1 Cors 15.21–22, 45–49; 1 Tim. 2.13–15.

² 1 Tim. 2.13–15.

This essay, then, will begin with an overview of Adam Christology in Paul before moving to examine the texts that specifically mention paradise. In these texts, the Christocentric theology of the New Testament writers overshadows the physical or geographical aspects of paradise. Nevertheless, the details attest to a belief in a real place and give enough evidence for us to offer some tentative reconstructions of their beliefs regarding that place. When these texts are read in the light of the Adam Christology, the descriptions of paradise in later Christian tradition can be more readily seen as being on a natural trajectory of development from the New Testament.

ADAM CHRISTOLOGY IN PAUL

In Romans 5.12–21 and 1 Corinthians 15.21–22, 45–49, Paul explicitly considers the person and work of Jesus in relation to the story and figure of Adam.³ In Romans 5.12–21, Paul contrasts the “one man” through whom sin and death came to all humanity with the “one man” through whom grace and life have abounded to many. Properly speaking, much of the account is concerned with the contrast not between the two men, but between the transgression and the gift. In verse 14, however, Adam is explicitly referred to as a “type” (τύπος) of the one to come (τοῦ μέλλοντος).

In a number of Jewish texts, some unquestionably older than the New Testament, Adam, as the bearer of the divine image, is arguably depicted as a glorious figure who lost his glory and his blessed condition as a result of his sin in the Garden.⁴ This may lie behind Paul’s thought in Romans 5.12–21; indeed it has been argued that such ideas underlie the logic of the whole of Romans 1–8, as these chapters narrate the loss (or exchange) of glory for idolatry, the response of God to Adam’s sin, and the recovery of glory through Christ.⁵ Whether or not we accept such a thoroughgoing Adamic logic, the presentation of Christ in such terms in Romans 5.12–21 places the Eden story at the heart of Christian soteriology. This

³ Eve is marginalized, of course. Hooker 1990, 115 understands this to reflect tendencies in Jewish exegesis of Genesis 2–3.

⁴ In rabbinic texts, *Gen. Rab.* 11.2, 12.6 and *b. Sanh.* 38b attest this idea. See further Sawyer 1992. Golitzin 2003 discusses the recovery of Adamic glory in some of the Qumran texts (notably 1QS) and in fourth-century Syrian writings, thus providing both interesting background and foreground for the theme in Paul. A recent overview of scholarship on Adam Christology is provided by Martin 2005, 19–48.

⁵ Hooker 1990, especially chapters 1, 5, 6, and 7.

also means that the account of the Christian hope in Romans 8.18–23, with its hope for creational restoration, can naturally acquire paradisiacal associations: the liberation of the creation from its bondage (8.21) will provide a physical home for the saints whose bodies have been redeemed (8.23), who are “conformed to the likeness” (συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνος 8.29) of the Son and who now enjoy a state of glory (8.30). Echoes of the story of Eden reverberate through these verses.

Such echoes are also heard in 1 Corinthians 15.21–22, 45–49. In verses 21–22 of this chapter, the contrast (as in Romans 5) is between the death and the life that have come through Adam and Christ respectively. The tenses are interesting: the verb used of all dying in Adam is present (ἀποθνήσκουσιν) where the verb used of all being made alive in Christ is future (ζωοποιηθήσονται). The latter is specified in verse 23 as occurring on the return of Christ (ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ). This highlights the inescapably future orientation of these verses, with 24–28 outlining the requirement for Christ to reign until all enemies are subjugated to him.⁶ We are not, therefore, speaking about the present experience of believers in union with Christ and in participation in the new creation (cf. 2 Cor. 5.14–17). When Paul returns to the question of the nature of the resurrection body, in verses 35 and following, he once again draws on the Adam typology. Now the contrast is between the earthly nature of the first Adam and the heavenly nature of the second (47–49), but even in describing the first man as χοϊκός, Paul retains a sense of his glory, stressing in verse 40 that “the glory of the heavenly is one kind, the glory of the earthly is another.” The dishonor and loss of glory that characterized Adam’s fallen state seem to be in view in verse 43; these serve to introduce the contrast between the earthly Adam and the heavenly Christ that is unpacked in verses 45–49, a contrast that, of course, forms the basis for Paul’s understanding of the resurrection state that the redeemed will enjoy.

These explicitly Adam-Christological passages may be related to other Pauline texts where ideas of new creation are present.⁷ There are also passages that scholars have seen as reflecting Adamic traditions, even though both Adam language and new creation imagery are absent.⁸ The

⁶ Lincoln 1981, 33–37 discusses the polemical significance of this emphasis on the future.

⁷ Notably 2 Corinthians 5.14–17, where realized aspects of the eschatology are maintained alongside future expectations.

⁸ Philippians 2.6–11; Colossians 1.15–23, 3.9–10. See Hooker 1990, 19–25, 88–100. For the presence of such an idea in Ephesians, see Martin 2005.

importance of all of this is that both Christ himself and the Christian hope of resurrection are presented in terms that may be related to the Eden narrative of Genesis 2–3. Granted that this is the case, it would be natural for interpreters of the New Testament to give prominence to paradise as a motif in their soteriology, eschatology, and artistry.⁹ The converse is also true: paradise will inevitably be construed in Christological and soteriological terms.¹⁰

2 CORINTHIANS 12.4

“And I know that this man was caught up into Paradise – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.”

Having begun with a discussion of Adam Christology in Paul, it is appropriate to turn next to the single reference to paradise in the Pauline letters. Paul’s account of an ascent to paradise in 2 Corinthians 12.4 reflects the genre of heavenly ascent within the Jewish apocalyptic texts, though as I shall note below, the reflection has some ironic aspects. Most scholars regard the “man” in question as being Paul himself,¹¹ since he refers to the revelations as a potential source of pride in verse 7. The narration of the account up to verse 4 in the third person may indicate that Paul is speaking of a heavenly version of himself¹² or it may simply be a rhetorical strategy, intended to contrast the value-judgment instinctively passed on the one who has ascended to paradise with the judgment that Paul has learned to pass upon himself: that despite the honor of receiving these visions he is weak and in constant need of grace (verses 9–10).

Leaving aside the question of wider context for the time being, the sub-unit of 2 Corinthians 12.1–4 presents us with the basic problem of whether paradise is to be equated with the third heaven mentioned in 12.2. The problem comes down to whether we are dealing, in 12.2–4, with two ascents, one ascent in two stages or one ascent described in two different ways.¹³ There are strong parallels between verse 2 and verses 3–4, laid out in this table adapted from Gooder:¹⁴

⁹ So, for example, Jerome in his *Homilies on the Psalms* 66 links our redemption in the new Adam to our hope for a paradise restored.

¹⁰ See Weinrich 2005, 387–93.

¹¹ Two exceptions to this are Smith 1981, 410 and Goulder 1991, 19.

¹² In critiquing Goulder, Morray-Jones 1993, 272 suggests that the third person is used in these verses to speak of Paul’s heavenly equivalent.

¹³ Rowland 1982, 381. ¹⁴ Gooder 2006, 172.

VERSE 2	VERSES 3–4
a. οἶδα ἄνθρωπον ἐν Χριστῷ	1. καὶ οἶδα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἄνθρωπον
b. πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων	2.
c. εἴτε ἐν σώματι οὐκ οἶδα,	3. εἴτε ἐν σώματι
d. εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα	4. εἴτε χωρὶς τοῦ σώματος οὐκ οἶδα
e. ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν	5. ὁ θεὸς οἶδεν
f. ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον	6. ὅτι ἥρπᾳγη
g. ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ	7. εἰς τὸν παράδεισον
h.	8. καὶ ἤκουσεν ἄρρητα ῥήματα, ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι.

The strength of these parallels has led some to conclude that where paradise is mentioned in verse 4 it is a simple equivalent to the third heaven of verse 2 (note points g. and 7. in the table above).¹⁵ Gooder, arguing that the various parallels are imprecise, and noting the difference in the prepositions that govern the two phrases, rejects this view, preferring to follow those who see the third heaven and paradise as distinct stages in a heavenly ascent.¹⁶ The most significant of Gooder's criticisms concern the prepositions. In verse 2, Paul describes how he was caught "up to (ἕως) the third heaven," while in verse 4 he speaks of being caught "into (εἰς) paradise." Gooder comments:

It is possible that the two stages which Paul mentions are an initial "catching" as far as but outside the third heaven and then a second "catching" into paradise.¹⁷

For Gooder, this suggests that paradise is not to be equated simply with the third heaven but rather is a specific area within it; from this she proceeds to develop the often-noted parallel with *2 Enoch* 8.1–8.¹⁸ In these verses, Enoch is carried up to the third of seven heavens,¹⁹ where he sees paradise.²⁰ The account is lavish and is largely taken up with a description of the tree of life, though other trees are also mentioned, emphasizing the lushness of the Garden. The account closes with a description of the angels who guard and tend the Garden. The version found in the longer recension

¹⁵ So Bietenhard 1951, 165.

¹⁶ To this, however, Gooder 2006, 190–211 adds her own distinctive view that Paul is describing a failed ascent.

¹⁷ Gooder 2006, 175.

¹⁸ Gooder's argument may be guilty of assuming too much precision, both positively in the use of the prepositions and negatively in her criticisms of parallels in Bietenhard 1951, 165. However, regardless of whether we see paradise as another term for the third heaven or as an area within it, the connection between the two terms is obvious and the parallel with *2 Enoch* 8.1–8 strong.

¹⁹ Ten heavens are described in the longer version of *2 Enoch*, but there is general agreement that the final three heavens (*2 Enoch* 21.6–22.1) are not part of the original text.

²⁰ In the shorter recension, Enoch is placed in paradise; in the longer he looks down upon it.

also describes rivers of milk and honey and oil and wine that flow into Eden (which is “between the corruptible and the incorruptible”²¹) before dividing into forty parts. Chapter 9 of *2 Enoch* goes on to list those for whom paradise has been prepared, a list with affinities to the account in Matthew 25.31–46, but also some differences.²² Thereafter, Enoch ascends through the other heavens and is brought into the divine presence in the seventh of these.²³

This, for Gooder and others, provides us with background for understanding Paul’s account of his ascent to paradise. *2 Enoch* is, however, a highly problematic text. In the introduction to his 1983 translation, Andersen famously stated that “in every respect *2 Enoch* remains an enigma,”²⁴ and despite the claims of some scholars to the contrary, the comment still rings true: a solid date and provenance for the text have yet to be established and conclusive arguments for the work being early and Jewish have still to be made.²⁵ Moreover, the work is highly recensional, with longer and shorter versions in circulation.²⁶ This means we must be cautious of bringing *2 Enoch* 8.1–8 (and the related references to paradise at 42.3–4 and 72.9) as background to Paul’s reference here and of using these verses to reconstruct Paul’s cosmology. In addition, Lincoln notes the rhetorical problem that we are left with by such a use of *2 Enoch* 8: “had he [Paul] been thinking of another four heavens above his third heaven, this would have detracted from the force of his account.”²⁷

An alternative background to 2 Cor. 12.1–4 is found in the various versions of the story of the Four Who Entered Paradise, a rabbinic tradition found in collections associated with Merkabah mysticism.²⁸ This tradition describes the entry into paradise of four rabbis, three of whom die on account of their failure to properly observe certain rules; only one, Rabbi Aqiba, successfully enters paradise and returns. Scholars are divided as to whether the story should be understood as a testimony to mystical

²¹ Might this additional detail be a Christian feature, reflecting the language of 1 Cor. 15?

²² Andersen 1993, 85–86, note 9 b.

²³ The longer recension depicts this as taking place in the tenth heaven. See note 19 above.

²⁴ Andersen 1993, 97.

²⁵ Macaskill 2007, 196–204.

²⁶ That said, this section of the text is attested in all recensions and is well integrated into the rest of the book. We can be fairly certain that it belongs to the original stratum of *2 Enoch*, although some details, such as the description of the rivers of milk and honey, oil and wine, may be secondary.

²⁷ Lincoln 1981, 78. See, too, Morray-Jones 1993, 277. Lincoln continues to note the varied and inconsistent witnesses to the Jewish cosmology of the period, remaining skeptical about the possibility of reconstructing Paul’s cosmology in the light of these.

²⁸ On the story and its textual witnesses, see Morray-Jones 1993 and Goshen-Gottstein 1995. Also Halperin 1980, 86–87 and Davila 1996.

experience²⁹ or as a parable on Torah scholarship.³⁰ The former position has been given some support by Davila's identification of parallels with *IQH^a* col. 16.4–26,³¹ strengthening Morray-Jones' argument that the story of the Four Who Entered Paradise can cast light on 2 Cor. 12.1–4. Little information is given in the story as to the content or character of paradise, but one detail is interesting. Rabbi Aqiba speaks of passing "the curtain" (פרגוד) and being deemed worthy to behold God's glory; such language suggests that paradise here represents the heavenly temple.³² If we accept that the story of the Four may provide background to 2 Cor. 12.1–4, this would suggest that the paradise to which Paul ascended, in which he received revelations not to be shared, was the heavenly temple itself. Contextually and rhetorically, such an understanding of the paradise to which Paul ascended is surely more appropriate than the parallel with 2 *Enoch* 8.

Paul clearly presents paradise as a "presently existing state,"³³ and this in itself is interesting, especially when connected to Paul's comments in 2 Cor. 5.2–4. These verses form part of Paul's discussion of the "heavenly house" in 2 Cor. 4.16–5.10, in which he returns to the subject of the future state of believers. The language of "nakedness" that Paul uses in 5.2–4 may be argued to refer to the intermediate state that the dead in Christ experience, prior to their reclothing in a heavenly body at the parousia.³⁴ As Lincoln notes, it may well be that Paul's vision of paradise informed his beliefs about the intermediate state of believers, as he sees the place of the righteous departed:

Paul is granted in this life an experience of this aspect of heaven, which thus anticipates both "the intermediate state" and the glory of the final consummation ... And while Paul did not receive any revelation about the future which he could communicate to others, it could well be that this anticipatory experience of Paradise is reflected in his perspective on the state of the believer after death.³⁵

Before we leave our discussion of 2 Corinthians 12.1–4, we must acknowledge the rhetorical thrust of the account within its wider context. The obvious lack of a description of paradise, and indeed Paul's avoidance

²⁹ So Scholem 1965a, 14–19 and Morray-Jones 1993, *passim*.

³⁰ So Urbach 1967, Schäfer 1984, and Goshen-Gottstein 1995.

³¹ Davila 1996. The article contains specific criticisms of Gottstein at note 38.

³² Morray-Jones 1993, 200–04.

³³ Lincoln 1981, 80.

³⁴ So Lincoln 1981, 65–67. The alternative of understanding Paul here to be speaking of a body received by the individual believer on death is problematic, since this would be in contradiction of the discussion in 1 Cor. 15, where heavenly bodies are given only at the parousia.

³⁵ Lincoln 1981, 80–81.

of revealing to others what has been revealed to him³⁶ seems to have a rhetorical function. H. D. Betz famously suggested that 2 Corinthians 12.1–4 was a parody of a heavenly ascent, followed by a parody of a healing (in 2 Cor. 12.7–10).³⁷ While specific aspects of Betz's case have generally been rejected,³⁸ the recognition that Paul is employing irony here is more widely accepted.³⁹ Faced with challenges to his credentials,⁴⁰ Paul recounts not a recent incident, but one from his past ("fourteen years ago," 12.2), the details of which he is forbidden to share (12.4)⁴¹ and which he refuses to boast in (although to do so would not be foolish, according to 12.6), having been kept from conceit by a thorn in his flesh (12.7), that he can endure only by God's grace (12.8). Thus, he will glory not in his honored status as a recipient of paradisiacal visions, but – and here the irony climaxes – in his weakness.⁴²

LUKE 23.42–43

And he said to him, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."
And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Exclusive to Luke's account of the crucifixion is this exchange between Jesus and one of the criminals crucified alongside him. Having criticized the other criminal for mocking Jesus, this man acknowledges the latter's status as Messiah through his request: "Remember me when you come in [or into – see below] your kingdom."⁴³ In response, Jesus promises that he will be with him today in paradise.

This text, with its emphasis on immediate entry into paradise, has been taken to indicate that Luke has a Platonized view of the afterlife, within which the soul is released by death to enter a non-somatic state. Montefiore's comments summarize this proposal of a Christianized version of Greek thought well:

³⁶ Note the reference to "unutterable words that a man may not speak," ἀρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι, in 12.4.

³⁷ Betz 1972, *passim*.

³⁸ See, for example, Lincoln 1981, 76 who is particularly critical of Betz's formal judgments and his subordination of content to these.

³⁹ For example, Bosenius 1994, 180–81; Humphrey 2002. ⁴⁰ 2 Cor. 10.1, 10.

⁴¹ Possibly reflecting rabbinical reluctance to discuss the Merkabah, for example in *m. Hag.* 2.1. On this text, the various cautions it reflects, and the various interpretations of these see Morray-Jones 1993, 185–90.

⁴² All of this, of course, makes particularly ironic the uptake of this passage in the *Apocalypse of Paul*, where the content of Paul's visions is revealed.

⁴³ This, at least, is the interpretation of the criminal's request most often followed by commentators.

Instead of waiting, all alike, in Hades or Sheol, till the Resurrection and the last judgement, the good and bad are judged at once. Straightway after death, the good go to heaven, the bad to hell.⁴⁴

On this verse in particular, Montefiore comments:

[The criminal] shall not merely “rise” and take part in the Kingdom, but he shall pass at once after death into paradise. Paradise must mean heaven, the heavenly paradise.⁴⁵

The view is further developed by Dupont,⁴⁶ who connects this passage to individualistic readings of Luke 12.16–21 (the parable of the rich builder), 12.33–34 (“store up treasure in heaven”) and 16.19–31 (the parable of Dives and Lazarus), all of which he sees as reflecting a shift by Luke towards an individual eschatology, by which the dead are judged immediately and sent to their appropriate destination.

This approach has been widely criticized for its neglect of Lucan texts that indicate a continuing belief in a final resurrection⁴⁷ and parousia (see below).⁴⁸ It has also been challenged for neglecting evidence both from the New Testament itself and from within Second Temple Judaism for belief in an intermediate state between death and resurrection, appropriate to the status of the individual as righteous or unrighteous. We have already noted the evidence from 2 Corinthians 5.2–4 that Paul believed in an intermediate state and acknowledged the possibility that he may have connected this to his vision of paradise. To this we might add other Jewish texts that speak of such an intermediate state. A. J. Mattill, notably, sought to counter Dupont’s arguments by connecting Luke 23.43 to the description of the delightful temporary residence of the righteous dead in *1 Enoch* 22.⁴⁹ This parallel is not perfect – the word “paradise” is not used of that place and when we encounter a description of “the garden,” in *1 Enoch* 32 (which has some parallels in *1 Enoch* 24–25), a different location is in view⁵⁰ – but allowing for a looser parallel between the texts *1 Enoch* 22 does support the idea of an intermediate state between death and resurrection, and one that is broadly paradisiacal. Paradise is also mentioned in the *Similitudes* (*1 Enoch* 60.8, 23; 61.12), where it is again the abode of the righteous and while these references do not clearly denote an intermediate state, they would be consistent with such an idea.

Acts 7.55–60, of course, provides a specifically Lucan parallel, as Stephen commits his spirit to Jesus, whom he has seen at the right hand of God in

⁴⁴ Montefiore 1927, 538.

⁴⁵ Montefiore 1927, 627. ⁴⁶ Dupont 1973. ⁴⁷ Luke 14.14, 20.27–39; Acts 4.2, 17.32, 24.15.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Bovon 2006, 70–72. ⁴⁹ Mattill 1979, 26–40.

⁵⁰ See the discussions in Bauckham 2006 and Tigchelaar 1999.

heaven. Here, again, the parallel is not perfect, for Jesus is now standing at the right hand of God, exalted to a position of power, and again the word “paradise” is not used. Still, when the texts are brought together, there does seem to be a common emphasis on death as being a moment of translation for the believer’s spirit.⁵¹ For Schweitzer, this should not be pressed too far in establishing a temporal scheme: “no detailed thoughts about a life after death are intended.”⁵² Instead, he comments, “the absolute otherness of the life consummated in God is no longer expressed by the temporal distance of the last day but by the spatial distance between earth and paradise.”⁵³ Given the arguments above for an intermediate state, however, Schweitzer’s caution may be too great, since the natural association of “today” is quite precisely temporal.⁵⁴

Cautiously, then, we may suggest that Luke’s brief mention here of paradise reflects the idea of an intermediate state enjoyed by believers and does not reflect a Platonizing tendency in Luke. *1 Enoch* 22 provides a less than perfect parallel to this, but is at least supportive of the general idea of an intermediate state for the righteous dead. If we connect Luke 23.43 with the parable of Dives and Lazarus (16.9–13), and allow the two texts to inform one another, the conclusion is strengthened, and the door opened for an interpretation of the latter that sees Lazarus as residing in paradise. Acts 7.55–60 also supports the conclusion. As we have noted, the parallel of Acts 7.55–60 with Luke 23.43 is imperfect, yet, held together as the two texts are by the idea of an intermediate state, they may still cast light on one another, allowing us to suggest further that the divine throne implied (though not described) in Acts 7.55–60 is located in paradise. This, of course, connects with our discussion of 2 Corinthians

⁵¹ The parable of Dives and Lazarus in 16.19–31 would be consistent with such an interpretation and need not be taken as supporting the view that Luke has a Platonized view of the afterlife.

⁵² Schweitzer 1975, 361. ⁵³ Schweitzer 1975, 361.

⁵⁴ Including this text, Luke uses *σήμερον* six times in ways that seem intended to present salvation as a present and not (simply) a future one. Luke 2.11 and 4.21 use *σήμερον* to link the present time with fulfillment of prophecy. Luke 5.26 uses the term as part of an expression of wonder at Jesus’ miraculous works (“we have seen wondrous things *[παράδοξα]* today”), clearly depicting these as pointing to the significance of the present time in relation to the kingdom (a point confirmed by the fact that the crowd become “ecstatic” and “glorify God”). The story of Zacchaeus also employs the term, but this time in ways that emphasize rather the importance of individual aspects of eschatology. The story has Jesus stating to Zacchaeus that he must climb down from the tree “immediately” for it is necessary for him to stay with the tax collector (*ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ σου δεῖ με μεῖναι*) “today.” As Zacchaeus receives Jesus joyfully and then subsequently promises to make recompense to those he has wronged and give half of his wealth to the poor, Jesus states, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham” (19.9). Zacchaeus here clearly represents the ideal reader in his undelayed response to Jesus, but the text also presents his experience of salvation as a present one. The question that has troubled so many scholars, of course, is how this relates to the concept of the “kingdom” and how the emphasis on a present salvation relates to Luke’s concept of salvation-history.

12.1–4 above and will further connect with our discussion of Revelation 22.1–2, below.

This brings us to the question of the relationship between paradise and the kingdom. Does Jesus' promise that the criminal will be with him in paradise mean that Luke is using παραδείσος as a synonym for βασιλεία, as it occurs in the criminal's request?⁵⁵ This, of course, leads us into difficult territory, for the twentieth century saw notoriously convoluted discussions about Lucan concepts of eschatology and salvation-history.⁵⁶ Despite the diversity of opinion on this, however, almost all scholars would agree on two points: Luke undeniably has a realized aspect to his eschatology,⁵⁷ seeing the kingdom as a present reality, yet he maintains belief in a future parousia. While there is less agreement about the significance of the ascension in his schema of salvation-history,⁵⁸ most would still regard this event as marking a definitive point in the establishment of the kingdom, without necessarily suggesting that it is climactic. Bringing this context to Luke 23.43 suggests that a straightforward equation of paradise with the kingdom is problematic: the kingdom is already present, and from the ascension onwards, Jesus will reign over it from the right hand of God, but it will not be consummated until the parousia. While Jesus is able to promise the criminal an immediate transition to paradise, this does not represent the totality of Jesus' kingdom.

REVELATION 2.7 AND 22.1–5

"To him who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life,⁵⁹ which is in the paradise of God."

The reference to paradise in Revelation 2.7 occurs within the letter to the church in Ephesus and constitutes a promise of blessing to the one

⁵⁵ This issue is complicated by a textual variant in verse 42. Among the earlier manuscripts, \mathfrak{P}^b , B, L, read μνήσθητί μου ὅταν ἔλθῃς εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν σου: "Remember me when you come *into* your kingdom." N, C, A, W, Θ, Ψ, family 1, family 13, Byz all read, μνήσθητί μου ὅταν ἔλθῃς ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ σου: "Remember me when you come *in* your kingdom." Both readings can, therefore, claim strong support from the witnesses. Important as the variant might be, however, the issue of the relationship between paradise and the kingdom cannot be solved on the basis of this text-critical issue, but must be addressed within the context of Luke's schema of salvation-history.

⁵⁶ These are well brokered by Bovon 2006, 1–85, 515–24.

⁵⁷ See footnote 54.

⁵⁸ Flender 1967 and Franklin 1975 both make the case that the ascension is the climactic event in the kingdom for Luke. The parousia hope is maintained, however, albeit in a relativized sense.

⁵⁹ This phrase has a close parallel in *T. Levi* 18.11, where the "new priest" grants to the saints such a privilege. The preceding verse describes the priest as opening the gates of paradise and removing the sword that has stood there since Adam. This whole section is missing from Aramaic Levi (for a recent reconstruction of this text see Drawnel 2004), though Kugler 1996 sees it as part of the pre-Christian original *Testament*.

who “conquers” or “overcomes” (τῷ νικῶντι). Similar promises are found in each of the letters to the seven churches and in each case they may be connected with elements from the subsequent visionary narrative. In this case, the promise looks forward to Revelation 22.1–5, which does not employ the word paradise, but is clearly the text in view, describing as it does the tree of life. This latter text is embedded in, and forms the climax of, a wider narrative unit that describes the New Jerusalem (21.1–22.5), the heavenly temple that descends to earth. This is not simply a description of the place in which the righteous will dwell: rather it is a symbol of the church itself, a fact that emerges in 21.9, as John’s guide says, “Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb,” a phrase that echoes John’s initial description of the New Jerusalem as descending as a bride (21.2).

The description is not of the church in its present state, but rather of the church that has attained purity; the description in Revelation 21, with its bridal language, is anticipated in 19.7:

The wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear. Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.

The symbol of the New Jerusalem as the bride is part of the intricate system of dualities that Revelation develops and stands in specific anti-thetical parallelism to Babylon the Harlot (chapters 17–18).⁶⁰ This latter symbol represents the Satanic world order embodied in Rome, in her idolatrous, military, and economic aspects. The church is to “come out” from this world order and to stand over against its values by following the Lamb.⁶¹ The beauty of Jerusalem derives from its fellowship with God (21.3, 22, 23) and its gifted splendor (21.18–21) contrasts with the stolen luxuries of Babylon (18.16).

The pure eschatological church of Revelation 21–22 stands in contrast to the moral reality of the present church as it is described in the various letters of chapters 2 and 3. These letters present a generally negative picture of it. Despite its moral failings, however, John still addresses the church as a body united with Christ: together they share “the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance *in Jesus*.”⁶² This union, though, is the union of a flawed church with her Saviour. What is

⁶⁰ In this regard, Revelation departs from Ezekiel, where Jerusalem is also portrayed as a harlot (see chapters 16 and 23).

⁶¹ Rev. 14.4. Cf. 7.14, 12.11. See, too, R.J. Bauckham’s argument that the saints’ act of washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb is symbolic of their participation in martyrdom (Bauckham 1993a, 226–29).

⁶² John writes in 1.9: Ἐγὼ Ἰωάννης, ὁ ἀδελφὸς ὑμῶν καὶ συγκοινωνὸς ἐν τῇ θλίψει καὶ βασιλείᾳ καὶ ὑπομονῇ ἐν Ἰησοῦ.

described in Revelation 22.1–5, by contrast, is a climactic depiction of that union, now cleansed of all impurity and entering its fullest consummation. All of this allows us to see how the description of paradise in 22.1–5 functions within the intricate paraenesis of Revelation, the climax of a complex symbolic drama, intended to encourage the church in its struggle with the world.

The description itself draws together elements from Genesis 2–3, Ezekiel 47, and Zechariah 14; of the three passages, Ezekiel 47 is central, weaving the others together through its imagery of trees and water. From the throne of God and of the Lamb that is at the heart of the city flows “a river of water of life.”⁶³ This draws upon the description of the river in Eden (Genesis 2.10) as it is developed in the image of the life-giving river that flows from under the altar in Ezekiel 47. The latter passage intensifies the Edenic associations of the temple account that are found throughout Ezekiel 40–48 and that in turn draw upon similar associations in earlier parts of the book.⁶⁴ The image in Ezekiel is also paralleled in Zechariah 14.8, where “living waters” go out from Jerusalem towards the east and west. In Revelation 22, of course, there is no altar for there is no temple: God and the Lamb comprise the temple of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21.22). The description of the tree of life “standing on either side of the river” and “yielding its fruit each month,” with leaves that are “for the healing of the nations” draws together the core symbol from Genesis 2.9 and 3.22 and the description of the trees that grow on either side of the river in Ezekiel 47.12.⁶⁵ The use of tree imagery in Ezekiel 47 links this passage back to the opening description of the temple in chapters 40 and 41, where trees are integral to the architecture.⁶⁶ The connection between these chapters is particularly conspicuous in the Septuagint, where the addition of *ἐνθεν καὶ ἔνθεν* to the description of the carved trees in 40.16 creates a closer parallel with 47.12. The description in Revelation 22.1–2 thus stands within, and draws upon, a textual tradition that makes strong

⁶³ Ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς.

⁶⁴ On the equation of Eden and Zion in Ezekiel 40–48 and its relationship to other parts of the book, notably Eze. 28 and 31, see Levenson 1976, 5–36 and Tuell 2000. The latter provides an extensive bibliography on the relevant scholarship.

⁶⁵ Ἐύλον ζωῆς ποιοῦν καρποὺς δώδεκὰ. The description is primarily indebted to Ezekiel 47, but the LXX version of that account speaks in 47.7 of many trees (*δένδρα πολλὰ σφόδρα*, translating the Hebrew כַּרְמֵי יָרֵד). Ezekiel 47.12, however, uses the singular *πάν εὖλον* (translating יָרֵד), which allows John to connect the text with the Greek of Genesis 2.9, where we encounter *ξύλον τῆς ζωῆς*.

⁶⁶ See especially 40.16, 22, 26, 31, 34, 37 and 41.18, 20, 25, 26. These architectural details are also reflected in 1 Kings 6.29, 32, 35.

associations between Eden, Zion, and the temple and develops these by means of the interwoven images of water and trees.⁶⁷

The great emphasis in Revelation 22.1–2 is on perfect fellowship with God as a life-giving reality. The image essentially constitutes a chain of life that flows as water from the throne of God and of the Lamb, irrigates the tree, and through the tree comes to nourish and heal the nations.⁶⁸ The life that is enjoyed by the occupants of the New Jerusalem is in no way separable from the presence of God. Nor is it in any way separable from the atoning work of Jesus, since it proceeds from the throne of the Lamb.⁶⁹ Indeed, it is noteworthy that the throne of the Slain Lamb (cf. 5.7) is in the place of the altar in Ezekiel 47.1, emphasizing the sacrificial nature of his death.

The river of water of life has been seen as more than just a symbol of fellowship with God; it has also been seen as symbolic of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁰ Some contemporary scholars have dismissed this as fanciful,⁷¹ yet it is not quite as straightforward to disregard as they suggest. Beale, for one thing, provides a number of parallels from both Jewish and Christian literature that represent the Spirit as living water.⁷² There also seems to me to be a parallel, generally overlooked, between this description of the divine throne and that found in 1.4 and 4.5, both of which speak of the seven spirits that are before the throne. As Bauckham has argued, this reference cannot be to the seven principal angels that stand in the presence of God,⁷³ since Revelation elsewhere refers to these simply as “the seven angels who stand before God” (8.2) and does not use the term “spirit” of angels. Instead, the seven spirits represent the Holy Spirit, the symbolism drawn, according to Bauckham, from John’s exegesis of Zechariah 4.1–14:

If we wonder why he should have attached such importance to this obscure vision of Zechariah, the answer no doubt lies in the word of the Lord which he would

⁶⁷ Both creational and paradisiacal associations of the temple are well established. The link between the temple/tabernacle and the creation account of Genesis 1 (as distinct from the Eden account of Gen. 2–3) is discussed by Brown 1999, 73–89. *Jubilees* portrays Eden in specifically cultic terms. See van Ruiten 1999.

⁶⁸ A striking feature of medieval iconography is the prominence of the image of the tree of life, partly through the influence of this text, though also drawing upon the account of Genesis 2–3 and the apocryphal association of the tree with the cross. See O’Reilly 1992.

⁶⁹ This directs the reader back to Rev. 5.6–10, and particularly to the great hymn of praise to the Lamb that has redeemed his worshippers with his blood.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Jerome in his *Homilies on the Psalms* 1 and Andrew of Caesarea, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* 22.1–2.

⁷¹ For example, Osborne 2002, 769. ⁷² Beale 1999, 1105.

⁷³ Tobit 12.15, 1 *Enoch* 20, 4QShirShabb.

have understood as the central message of the vision: “Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts.” (Zech. 4.6)⁷⁴

The fact that seven spirits represent the one Spirit proceeds from the identification of the lampstand with seven lamps (Zechariah 4.2, corresponding to the lamps that burn “before the LORD” in the earthly sanctuary in Exodus 40.25) with the Spirit mentioned in Zech. 4.6. This is elaborated by the statement in Zech. 4.10: “These seven are the eyes of the LORD, which range through the whole earth.” As the eyes of the LORD himself, the seven lamps representing the divine Spirit belong to the being of God and this, for Bauckham, proves that Revelation 1.4 is, in fact, a Trinitarian blessing formulation.⁷⁵ The link with Zechariah 4.10 is further confirmed by the way in which it is taken up in Rev. 5.6, in the description of the Lamb, who has “seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth.”

The relevance of this to our understanding of Revelation 22.1–2 is two-fold. First, the throne of God that is depicted in 1.4 and in chapters 4–5 is the throne of a triune God: it is the throne of God and of the Lamb and before it are the seven Spirits, which are cannot be separated from the throne image since they are the eyes *of* the Lord (by inference from Zechariah 4.10) and *of* the Lamb (explicitly in Rev. 5.6) and thus belong to the divine identity. Second, the seven Spirits, inseparable from that divine identity, represent the activity of God in the world, the procession of his agency into the world. When, therefore, we approach Revelation 22.1–5 – which is, after all, a throne vision – with the throne imagery of 1.4 and chapters 4–5 in mind, we would expect to find some representation of the Spirit that is before the throne of God and that proceeds from it. Granted that this is the case, and taking into account the textual parallels noted by Beale, I would suggest that the image of the water of life fulfills this role: it is a symbol of the fellowship with the triune God that is mediated by the Holy Spirit.

The account continues in verse 3 with the statement that there will be no more curse: καὶ πᾶν κατάθεμα οὐκ ἔσται ἔτι. The term used here is κατάθεμα, which is essentially synonymous with both κατάρα and ἀνάθεμα and can denote either a “curse” or “something accursed.” Although it uses ἀνάθεμα, the text that John primarily draws on here is Zechariah 14.11, in which Jerusalem is promised peace from the curse of destruction and war. Given the interweaving of Ezekiel 47, Zechariah 14, and Genesis 2–3 noted above, however, we should also see an allusion to the comprehensive

⁷⁴ Bauckham 1993a, 163. ⁷⁵ Bauckham 1993a, 164.

cursing of Genesis 3.14–19. While the Septuagint text of Genesis 3.14 and 17 uses the adjective ἐπικατάρατος for the cursed state, and cannot be linked by terminology to Revelation 22.3, there is a logical contrast between man's difficult experience of farming cursed ground (Genesis 3.19) and the easy abundance of the fruit of the tree of life that surely links the two passages.

This point is rather important for how we construe the symbolism of Revelation 22.1–5 in relation to the expectation of actual experience of paradise. The curse involves estrangement from the fellowship of God, now restored and symbolized by the tree of life, but it also has a physical or cosmic dimension and the restoration depicted here must also have such a dimension. This may not be primary, but it is implied, and it means that the symbolic account of the eschatological church in paradisiacal terms cannot be divorced from a real expectation of a restored, repristinated world.

Verse 3 continues by restating the fact that the throne of God and of the Lamb is in the city, promising that “his servants will serve him,” and that “they will see his face” (verse 4). This great expectation of eschatological knowledge is further developed by the statement that “his name will be on their foreheads,”⁷⁶ above all denoting ownership. Verse 5 goes on to describe the glory of God as lighting the city and rendering unnecessary further illumination.

The climax of the account, of course, is the statement that “they will reign forever and ever” (βασιλεύσουσιν εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων). Βασιλεύσουσιν occurs at two other points in Revelation, in 5.10 and 20.6, and these inform our reading of 22.5. The first occurrence is in the context of the worship of the Lamb by the elders and the living creature, as they praise him for the redemption of his people. Along with 1.6, the text here draws upon Exodus 19.6 in describing the saints as a kingdom and priests (βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς) and further promises that they will rule “upon the earth.” The rule of the saints, though, is inseparable from the rule of the Lamb: the statement of 5.10 is made in the context of the throne vision of chapter 5 and is specifically part of the hymn of praise to the Redeemer, the Lamb. The same is true of the second occurrence of βασιλεύσουσιν, in 20.6, which is part of the narrative of the millennium. Again, Exodus 19.6 is in the background, with the saints described as priests of God and of Christ, and again a promise is made that the saints will rule, this time

⁷⁶ This contrasts, of course, with those who bear the mark of the beast (Rev. 13.16–18) and is another element within Revelation's intricate paraenesis of dualisms.

for a thousand years. βασιλεύουσιν is here qualified by “with Him,” μετ’ αὐτοῦ, emphasizing that, once again, the rule of the saints proceeds from their communion with Christ and is predicated upon His victory. When these texts are brought to 22.5, the climactic reference to the reign of the saints, they serve to establish that the reign of the servants of the Lamb proceeds from His redemptive work and from their communion with Him.

Thus, John’s description of paradise, as Revelation 22.1–5 elaborates upon 2.7, takes physical characteristics of the Garden, drawn from Old Testament sources, and reworks these into a symbolic representation of the fellowship of the church with God. This is not to say, however, that the symbolism does not correspond to actual expectations of paradisiacal experience in the age to come. The fact that the image speaks of an end to the curse, in terms of its agricultural (and thus creational) significance points to a restored world in which the blessings of peace, healing, comfort, and bounty are enjoyed; conceptually this is rather similar to Romans 8.18–23. These blessings, though, are in no way separable from the great central reality of unmarred fellowship with God. At present, John’s church is in fellowship with Christ (1.9), but that fellowship is imperfect, marred by the abiding reality of sin within the church, a problem that must be “overcome” (chapters 2–3); the great hope of 22.1–5, resolving the paraenesis of the whole book, is of a perfect and sinless communion with the triune God.

One final comment must be made on Revelation 2.7 and 22.1–5. The eventual canonical location of the account of paradise in Revelation 22.1–5 is surely significant. Found so close to the end of the Christian Bible, these verses inevitably take on a particular significance in shaping Christian expectation for the future. Moreover, they give the Christian canon a certain symmetry, balancing the account of the first paradise in Genesis 2–3 with a description of its recovered eschatological equivalent. These facts are important as we consider the formative influence that the New Testament exerted on later Christian paradise traditions.

CONCLUSION

The New Testament says little explicitly about paradise, with only three occurrences of the word. Yet those occurrences take on greater significance when read in the light of the Adam Christology that is prominent in Paul and that would later come to be so prominent in the writings of Fathers

such as Irenaeus⁷⁷ and in the various narrative traditions about Adam. This presented Christ's redemptive work in terms of the reversal or overcoming of the comprehensive curse pronounced on Adam and the earth, a curse that, of course, involved the first couple being driven from paradise. The centrality of this soteriology to Paul's thought helps to explain the prominence of paradise within subsequent Christian tradition and to highlight that this is a trajectory of thought rooted in the New Testament.

It is also noteworthy that all of the texts seem to reflect the equation of the heavenly paradise with the heavenly temple. The climactic narrative of the New Testament, in Rev. 22.1–5, describes that temple descending to earth as the fullest realization of the union of the Church with Christ. This, too, may be connected with wider themes in the New Testament, with those texts that understand the Church to be the true temple, a tradition that may arguably be traced back to the words of the historical Jesus.⁷⁸ There is, then, a belief in a present paradise, where the righteous dead reside and to which, in some sense, the church is spiritually connected in its fellowship with God through the Spirit; but this does not eclipse or contradict an expectation of a future earthly paradise, when Christ's reign is perfected and the hopes of the Church fully realized.

⁷⁷ See Nielsen 1968; Steenberg 2008.

⁷⁸ Matt. 26.61; 27.40; Mark 14.58; 15.29; John 2.19–21; 1 Cor. 3.16–17; 2 Cor. 6.16; Eph. 2.21; 1 Pet. 2.5.

CHAPTER 7

Quis et unde? *Heavenly obstacles in Gos. Thom. 50 and related literature*

Simon Gathercole

INTRODUCTION

Ever since Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise, people have been trying to get back in again. The protoplasts' return, however, was blocked by cherubim and a flaming sword (Gen. 3.24), and post-biblical tradition has elaborated further on these obstacles, while also developing ways to get around or through them. Some have thought this possible even during earthly life: witness Paul's rapture ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ ... εἰς τὸν παράδεισον (2 Cor. 12.3, 4), or the four who entered the Pardes (however that is to be understood) in rabbinic tradition (*b. Hag.* 14b). Others, however, have thought in terms of a post-mortem journey, like Jesus and the penitent thief (Luke 23.43).

The focus of this chapter is the character of journeys through the heavenly realms, whether in this life or the next,¹ in early Christian and Christian-influenced literature² up to about 300 AD.³ *Specifically, we will examine works which refer to methods for passing guardian figures blocking heavenly ascent.* The motif is identified by Rudolph as a favorite *gnostisches* theme:

Jedenfalls haben viele der gnostischen Schriften das Thema der Seelenreise als Himmelfahrt durch die feindliche Welt der Gestirne, Planeten oder „Archonten“ (ursprünglich ein Name für „Beamte“) zum Inhalt. Allein von den 46 neuen

¹ In practice, it is often difficult to distinguish between them.

² This is needless to say not merely a feature of Christian-influenced works. The motif is very widespread in antiquity: see e.g. Hornung 1999 on Egypt, and the survey of Hittite, Indian, Iranian, and Punic material in Bernabé Pajares and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008, 207–26.

³ The motif persists in Christian literature after the period in view here. See e.g. the references in Festugière 1972, 62 n. 1. There are also numerous references in the *Ginza*: see references in the Index (under “Zöllner”) to Lidzbarski 1925. The motif also becomes a feature of non-Christian Jewish works such as 3 *Enoch* and the *Hekhalot* literature. On this, see especially Maier 1963, and Gruenwald 1980. Himmelfarb 1993 mentions the present theme briefly in her discussions of the *Ascension of Isaiah* (p. 57) and the *Hekhalot* literature (p. 109).

gnostischen Texten aus Nag Hammadi, die seit 1945 bekannt geworden sind, befassen sich 12 damit.⁴

The focus in this essay will be on narratives of passage past these obstacles, or on detailed prescriptions of how to pass them, rather than on brief allusions to this motif, which are also common.⁵ Such narratives and prescriptions occur not only in native contexts such as the Nag Hammadi codices and Codex Tchacos,⁶ but also in the heresiological reports of both the Fathers and Celsus and Plotinus. This paper proposes to examine the presentations of obstacles to heavenly ascent and the strategies for passage, and to argue that a controverted passage in the *Gospel of Thomas* (not one of Rudolph's twelve) also exhibits this motif.

1. ASCENSION OF ISAIAH 9.1–6⁷

Depending on when one dates the *Ascension of Isaiah*, it may contain the first case of this motif in a Christian writing.⁸ It is difficult to see this as a pre-Christian Jewish passage, however, given that Christ is so integral to the scene. Four characters are involved here in the account of Isaiah's ascent: the ascending Isaiah narrating, the *angelus interpres*, the angelic guardian, and Christ:

1 And he took me into the air of the seventh heaven, and I heard a voice saying to me: "How far up here are you coming, while you still desire to live in the flesh?" And I was greatly afraid, and trembled. 2 And again, I heard a voice saying: "Do not stop him entering, for he is worthy of the glory of God, for here is his garment." 3 And I asked the angel who was with me: "Who is he who forbade me,

⁴ Rudolph 1996, 250.

⁵ Cf. Clem. Alex. *Strom.* 4.116.2, where in its ascent, the soul shows to the angels the σύμβολον ἄγιον which is the χαρακτήρα τῆς δικαιοσύνης. The *Sentences of Sextus* probably allude to the theme: μακάριος ἀνὴρ, οὗ τῆς ψυχῆς οὐδεὶς ἐπιλήψεται εἰς θεὸν πορευομένης (*Sent. Sext.* 40). The *Treatise on the Resurrection* perhaps refers to an ascent past the archons without being seized or restrained (45.38–39). In the *Apocryphon of James*, Jesus tells James, "I have taught you the speech before the archons" (ΛΥΩ ΛΕΓΕΤΕ ΕΙΣΤΕ ΛΕΛΑ ΛΟΥΠΟΘΕΟΙΣ ΝΗΝΑΡΡΗ ΝΗΝΑΡΧΩΝ; *Ap. Jas.* 8.27–36). *Acts of Thomas* 148 and 167 are from prayers by Thomas that he not be impeded by the tax-collectors and other opponents in the course of his ascent.

⁶ It has been speculated that the motif may be present in the problematic passage in *G. Jud.* 46.24–47.1 where someone (the other disciples?) may be preventing Judas from ascending to the holy generation; those who follow a more negative interpretation of Judas in the work, however, tend to see a reference to Jesus announcing that Judas will not finally ascend. For the former interpretation, see Kasser and Wurst 2007, 211 n. 25; for the latter, see DeConick 2007, 54–57. Since the passage is by no means a clear instance of the motif under discussion here, it will not be treated.

⁷ The versification here follows that of M. Knibb in *OTP* 2.156–176. Translation here (from the Latin), and for the subsequently quoted primary sources in this essay, is my own.

⁸ For a selection of dates, see Bauckham 1993b, 119 n. 4.

and who is he who permitted me to ascend?" 4 And he said to me: "He who forbade you is the angel who is over the singing angels of the sixth heaven. 5 And he who permitted you is the Son of God, whose name you are not able to hear until you have departed the flesh." 6 And we ascended into the seventh heaven, and I saw there a wonderful, indescribable light, and innumerable angels.

The passage does not deal with an evil angelic opponent, though the angel's voice – as conventionally even in a good angel – does terrify Isaiah. Although he is described by both Isaiah and the angel as *prohibens*, he is undoubtedly a positive figure, *super cantantes angelos sexti coeli angelus* (9.4), "the angel chorus-master."⁹ This example may be more reflective of the motif of angelic-human rivalry than of the idea of strategies for passing heavenly obstacles. On the other hand, this latter is more in evidence in the later account of the *descent* of Christ (10.7–31), who needs transformation and passwords (vv. 24–25: *characterem/signa*; cf. v. 31) to pass unnoticed.¹⁰ In the ascent of Isaiah, we merely have the idea that the garment is necessary for passage past the guardian. As such, this example is included here with some hesitation; it is not nearly so developed as the accounts to follow.

2. GOSPEL OF MARY 15.1–17.9

The second extant Coptic portion of the *Gospel of Mary* begins with a dialogue not paralleled in either of the Greek fragments. Mary is reporting to the male disciples the revelation from Jesus about the dialogues which the ascending soul has with the powers. Two points are unclear: (a) whether the ascent envisaged is post-mortem, or experienced in one's lifetime, and (b) whether the heavenly interlocutors are talking with the soul of a disciple, or with that of the ascending Jesus; the distinction may in any case be a false one.¹¹ On the missing page 14, there has probably been a dialogue between the soul and the power named Darkness (see the names of the fourth power, which seems to sum up all the previous).¹² We encounter the soul on page 15 in discussion with the second power, Desire:¹³

⁹ Knight 1996, 60.

¹⁰ Francis Williams suggests that the *Apocryphon of James* alludes to hostile powers opposing the saviour's descent (*Ap. Jas.* 15.9–13): Williams 1985, 35. Cf. also the Naassene Hymn, which refers to Jesus "bearing seals" (Hippolytus *Ref.* 5.10: σφραγίδας ἔχων).

¹¹ Tuckett 2007, 173. With Tuckett, the detachment in the report does suggest a post-mortem ascent. His conclusion that this probably means that the ascent is the Saviour's, however, does not necessarily follow: the reference could be to a future ascent of Mary's soul.

¹² King 2003, 69.

¹³ On the passage as a whole, see King 2003, 69–81; Tuckett 2007, 180–85.

... and Desire said, "I did not see you descending; but now I see you ascending. How can you lie, since you belong to me?" The soul answered and said, "I saw you, but you did not see me nor did you recognize me; I was (merely) a garment to you and you did not know me." When it had said these things, it went away rejoicing greatly.

Again it came to the third power, called Ignorance. It questioned the soul, saying: "Where are you going (ΕΡΕΒΗΚ ΕΤΩΝ)? In wickedness you have been bound; you were bound indeed. Judge not." And the soul said, "Why do you judge me, when I judged not? I was bound, when I did not bind. I was not known, but I knew that all will be dissolved, both earthly and heavenly things."

After the soul had defeated the third power, it ascended, and saw the fourth power. This was sevenfold in form. The first form was darkness, the second desire, the third ignorance, the fourth the jealousy of death, the fifth is the kingdom of the flesh, the sixth is the foolish knowledge of the flesh, the seventh is wrathful wisdom. These are the seven powers of wrath, who ask the soul, "From where do you come (ΕΡΕΝΗΥ ΧΙΝ ΤΩΝ), murderer, or where are you going (Η ΕΡΕΒΗΚ ΕΤΩΝ), conqueror of space?" The soul answered and said, "What seizes me has been killed; what surrounds me has been overcome; and my Desire has come to an end and Ignorance is dead. By a world I have been released from a world, and by a type, from a higher type and from the fetter of oblivion, which is temporary. From this time I will receive the repose of the time of the season of the Aeon in silence."

When Mary had said this, she was silent, since the Saviour had (only) spoken to her thus far.

This is a wittily constructed exchange, in which the soul ironically reverses the assumptions of its opponents at every turn. At the beginning of the extant section, Desire objects that the soul has no right to ascend to a place from which it has not come, at least as far as Desire is aware: rather, the soul belongs to the earthly realms, and so belongs to her. The response to Desire, however, presupposes a prior descent of the soul: as such, the soul does have the right to return to its place of origin. The soul boasts of its superior knowledge: on its way down, the soul saw Desire without being seen. In the third dialogue, after some strange questioning including "Where are you going?," the soul makes negative confessions ("I judged not ... I did not bind ...") and again boasts of its knowledge ("I recognized that ...").¹⁴

The fourth and final dialogue has a number of interesting features. First, the interlocutor is a seven-formed figure who sums up (presumably) the previous three antagonists and more. Second, there is a hint that the celestial powers are understood in anthropological terms: in recounting

¹⁴ On the difficult problem of the reference to the garment, see Tuckett 2007, 181.

its journey thus far, which includes passage beyond Desire and Ignorance, the soul declares, “*my* desire (τᾶς ἐπιθυμίας) has come to an end.”¹⁵

In sum, the questions amount to disputes over the origin and destination of the soul, and arise out of the mistaken assumptions of the powers that the soul is earthly and thus belongs to them. The soul is absolutely triumphant in this exchange: “The tone is almost jocular, certainly mocking, as each time the soul turns the tables on its antagonist.”¹⁶

3. IRENAEUS AH 1.21.5/ 1 AP. JAS. 33.13–35.20
(= CODEX TCHACOS 19.24–22.23)

One of the most useful passages to examine for our theme is the ἀπολύτρωσις formula preserved by Irenaeus and Epiphanius as well as in the *First Apocalypse of James* from Nag Hammadi. Now the latter is known in even more complete form from Codex Tchacos (where it is called simply *James*).¹⁷ Irenaeus discusses the ritual in his treatment of the Marcosians; Epiphanius when describing the Heracleonites (*Pan.* 36.2.4–3.4). The Latin version of Irenaeus is translated here:

There are others who redeem the dead even up to the moment of expiration, by putting on their heads oil and water, or the aforementioned ointment with water, using the invocations mentioned above so that they may become incapable of being seized or seen by the principalities and powers, and that their inner persons may ascend above the invisible realms, as if their bodies were left in the created world, but their souls sent forth to the demiurge. And they instruct them to say, as they come to these powers after they die:

“I am a son from the Father, of the Father who was pre-existent – and a son in Him who was pre-existent. I have come to behold all things, those my own and those alien – yet they are not completely alien, but belong to Achamoth, who is female, and has made these things for herself, for she has derived a generation from Him who is pre-existent – and I come again to my own place whence I went forth.”

And they say that, by saying these things, they evade and escape the powers.

He also advances to those in the entourage of the demiurge, and says to them:

¹⁵ See Tuckett 2007, 184: “Perhaps one sees here the real sense in which Gnostic-type mythologies, with named agents having quasi-personal form, do genuinely correspond to, and reflect, existential human conditions.” King 2003, 74–75 quotes *Poimandres* 1.25–26 in which, as the soul ascends, it gives up its sinful attributes stage by stage. She considers that in *G. Mary* too, “the Powers represent the forces within the soul that it must overcome” (79).

¹⁶ Tuckett 2007, 180.

¹⁷ Though the two Coptic mss. probably derive from a different Greek *Vorlage* in each case, they are nevertheless very close. In fact, the new Codex Tchacos version has enabled a previously unplaced fragment from Nag Hammadi to be placed in the appropriate page in Nag Hammadi Codex v. See the essays by A. Marjanen and W.-P. Funk in DeConick (forthcoming).

"I am a precious vessel, greater than the female who made you. Even if your mother does not know her root, I know myself, and know from where I am, and I call upon the incorruptible Sophia, who is in the Father. She is the mother of your mother, who has no father, nor any male consort. Yes, a female born from a female created you, while ignorant of her own mother, and thinking that she alone existed; but I call upon (*inuoco*) her mother."

When those in the entourage of the demiurge hear these things, they are greatly disturbed, and rebuke their root and the generation of their mother. But they [i.e. the redeemed] go into their own place, having thrown off their chain, that is, their psychic element. These, then, are the details which have come to us concerning the "redemption."

A long section of the *First Apocalypse of James*, both in the Nag Hammadi and Codex Tchacos exemplars, runs along the same lines. Jesus instructs James what he is to say, which will be for his salvation (CT 19.21–24). Later, however, it becomes clear that this revelation is going to be known more widely, in a kind of apostolic succession: James will reveal them to Addai/Addaios when he dies, i.e. presumably when he is on his death-bed (23.13–15); Addai will write them down ten years later, at which point the words are taken from Addai and given to Manael/Masphel (23.19–24.1). Manael leaves them to his son, Levi, who marries a woman from Jerusalem, and has two sons: the elder is ignorant, but the younger will "grow up with" the words, and reveal them when he is seventeen years old (21.1–26). Many are saved by the words, or ΔΟΓΜΑ, of this unnamed figure, though many also despise it (25.5–13). This is all set in a historical framework: James' death is followed immediately by war in the land (23.15–17), there is war again in the time of Levi (24.10–11), and again after Manael's son's seventeenth birthday (25.1–2).

The main part of the revelation about the post-mortem encounter runs as follows:

When you come into their hands, one of those who is a guard will say to you,

"Who are you," or "Where are you from?"

You are to say to him,

"I am a son, and I am from the Father."

He will say to you,

"What sort of son are you, and to what Father do you belong?"

You are to say to him,

"I am from the Pre-existent Father, and a son in the Pre-existent One."

And he will say to you, "From where have you come?", you are to say to him, "From the Pre-existent One."

And he will ask [me], "Why have you come?" and you will say, "I have come to all those things which are mine and those which are not mine."

He will say, "To what have you come, then? To things not your own?"

You are to say to him, "They are not entirely alien to me, but they are from Achamoth, who is the female. And these she created for herself, and she brought down this generation from the Pre-existent One. They are not alien, then, but they are ours. They are ours because she who is mistress over them is from the Pre-existent One, yet they are alien because the Pre-existent One did not have intercourse with her before she produced them."

When he also says to you, "Where will you go?" you are to say to him, "To the place from which I have come, there I shall return." (NH v 33.11–34.18; CT 20.7–21.18).¹⁸

This is remarkably similar to the exchange we have in Irenaeus, so much so in fact, that it is likely that Irenaeus had before him something very like this. Most significantly, in addition to what Irenaeus tells us, the *First Apocalypse of James* supplies the actual questions posed by the archons. Otherwise, they share both the central claim, the declaration of being a son of the Father, a pre-existent being returning to its proper place, as well as much of the additional details. Some of these details recur elsewhere, such as the agitation of the archons and the language of invocation, both of which appear in 2 *Jeu* 52 (see discussion in §9 below).

4. NAG HAMMADI APOCALYPSE OF PAUL 22.30–24.1

The Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul* sees Paul progress beyond merely the third heaven as he does in 2 Cor. 12.1–4. As he ascends, he encounters various scenes: in the fourth heaven, Paul sees souls being punished (pp. 20–21). Later, entering the sixth heaven, he encounters a "tax-collector" (a common title for such guardian figures), but Paul only needs to ask permission to enter (22.19–24).

More involved for Paul is the key exchange for our purposes, in the seventh heaven. Here, Paul encounters an old man, fragmentarily referred to in 22.24–25, but then more clearly:

The old man spoke, saying to me, "Where are you going (ΕΚΝΑΒΩΚ ΕΤΩΝ), Paul, who are blessed and were set apart from your mother's womb?" I looked at the Spirit, and he was nodding his head, saying to me, "Speak with him." And I replied, saying to the old man, "I am going to the place from which I came." And the old man replied to me, "Where are you from (ΕΚΤΩΝ ΠΙΕ)?" But I replied, saying, "I am going down to the world of the dead so that I might lead captive the captivity that was led captive in the captivity of Babylon." The old man replied to

¹⁸ The majority of the text is translated from the Nag Hammadi version (indicated by plain text), but where there is a large lacuna there, this has been supplemented with translation of the Codex Tchacos text (indicated in italics). Although methodologically not ideal, this pragmatic solution is sufficient for the present purposes.

me saying, “How are you able to get away from me? Look and see the principalities and powers.” The Spirit spoke, saying, “Give him the sign which is in your hand ([ἡ] **CHMION** **ΕΤΝΤΟΟΤΚ**), and he will open for you.” And then I gave him the sign (**CHMION**). He turned his face downwards to his creation and to those who are his own authorities. And then the seventh heaven opened, and we went up to the Ogdoad.

Interesting here in connection with the ἀπολύτρωσις ritual and the *Gospel of Mary* is the explicit relation of origin and destiny. The old man asks about destination; Paul says he is returning to his place of origin; the old man then wants to know where that is. However, we then receive an extraordinary reply which must surely be an indication of an incoherent combination of sources or just carelessness:¹⁹ Paul says he is going down to the realm of the dead – a clear untruth, for he is obviously going upwards.

The old man who was characterized earlier in terms recalling the Danielic Ancient of Days (22.25–30), is hostile, and challenges Paul as to how he is to escape. The Spirit, however, tells Paul to give him the sign he has.

5. ORIGEN, *CONTRA CELSUM* 6.30–31

The present passage is concerned with the so-called “Ophite Diagram,” and is doubly useful because Origen records not only Celsus’ account of the diagram but also his (Origen’s) own. To make it clear that Christians know just as much about these wicked heretics as Celsus does, Origen corrects Celsus’ account (6.30). Indeed, it is often argued that the two possessed different versions of the diagram.²⁰ Origen is also concerned to assert that real Christians do not have anything to do with such sorcery (6.32).

5.1 *Celsus’ account* (c. *Cels.* 6.30)

The present passage does not deal explicitly with heavenly obstacles, although Origen later quotes Celsus as referring to those who have “wretchedly learnt by heart the names of the door-keepers” (c. *Cels.* 7.40).

¹⁹ Murdock and MacRae note inconsistency in the shifts back and forth from first- and third-person narration, and attribute this to “literary carelessness rather than to multiple sources.” See Murdock and MacRae 1979, 48. W.-P. Funk also notes a number of incongruities (*NTA* 2:696–97 and in the notes at 2:700).

²⁰ Chadwick 1953, 337 n. 3, and now Denzey 2005. Welburn 1981 regards both as having different copies of the same drawing.

These are not actually named by Celsus, although the figures are described as follows:

- ... the first is formed in the shape of a lion. . .
- ... the next, the second, is a bull. . .
- ... the third was a double being which hissed awfully (φρικῶδες ἐπισυρίζοντα). . .
- ... the fourth has the form of an eagle. . .
- ... the fifth has the face of a bear. . .
- ... the sixth is asserted by them to have the face of a dog. . .
- ... the seventh has the face of an ass and is called Thaphabaoth or Onoël.

As already noted, Origen makes some corrections to this, and then proceeds to his own version.

5.2 *Origen's account* (c. Cels. 6.31)

Origen's description of the diagram is prefaced with an explicit statement that it concerns "what they (i.e. souls) are taught to say at the eternally chained gates of the Archons" when they have left this world. As Chadwick notes, Origen in fact has the list in reverse order (with the fourth gate omitted from the sequence), starting as he does with the supreme sphere.²¹

I greet the one-formed king, the bond of blindness, unconscious oblivion, the first power, kept by the spirit of providence and by wisdom. From you I am sent pure, already part of the light of the Son and the Father (φωτὸς ἤδη μέρος υἱοῦ καὶ πατρός). Grace be with me; yes, Father, let it be with me . . .

You with your boldness, first and seventh, born to rule, Ialdabaoth, who are sovereign reason of a pure mind, a perfect work to Son and Father, I bear the symbol of life in the character of a type (χαρακτῆρι τύπου ζωῆς σύμβολον ἐπιφέρων). Opening to the world the gate which you closed against your aeon, I pass again freely through your realm. Grace be with me; yes, Father, let it be with me . . .

You who shine by night, ruler over the hidden mysteries of Son and Father, second Iao and first prince of death, and portion of the innocent: I bear now my obedient mind as a symbol (φέρων ἤδη τὸν ἴδιον ὑπήκοον νοῦν σύμβολον), ready to pass through your realm, having strengthened him who is born from you by the living word. Grace be with me; Father, let it be with me . . .

Archon of the fifth realm, powerful Sabaoth, defender of the law of your creation, which is set free by your grace through a more powerful Pentad, let me go, as you see the faultless symbol (σύμβολον) of your craft, with me preserved by the stamp of an image (εἰκόνι τύπου), a body liberated by a Pentad. Grace be with me, Father, let it be with me . . .

²¹ Chadwick 1953, 346 n. 3.

Astaphaeus, archon of the third gate, overseer of the first principle of water, regard me as an initiate. Let me go, for I am purified with the spirit of a virgin, as you see the essence of the world. Let grace be with me, Father, let it be with me

...

Aloaeus, archon of the second gate, let me go, as I bring to you a symbol of your mother (τῆς σῆς μητρὸς φέροντά σοι σύμβολον), a grace which is hidden by the powers of the realms. Let grace be with me, Father, let it be with me . . .

You who fearlessly hurdled the barrier of fire, Horaeus, whose portion is rule over the first gate, let me go, as you see the symbol of your power nullified by the figure of the tree of life (σῆς ὀρῶν δυνάμεως σύμβολον καταλυθὲν τύπῳ ζωῆς ξύλου), taken by an image according to the likeness of an innocent (εἰκόني καθ' ὁμοίωσιν ληφθὲν ἀθώου). Let grace be with me, Father, let it be with me.

The first power is not named, and releases the soul not on request, but automatically because it is already purified. Thereafter in Origen's account, the pattern is highly formulaic. The power is addressed with a name, number, and brief description of role; the ascending soul then appeals to an image (σύμβολον) as the basis for its permission to pass. A plea for grace (as in the first case) comes at the end. The exception is at the third gate, whether there does not seem to be appeal to a symbol. Overall, striking in Origen's account is the degree to which visible signs are the principal *sine qua non* for passage. Sometimes these signs are concerned with aspects of the traveller's identity (e.g. "I bear now my obedient mind as a symbol"). In general, however, both the symbols and the declarations are more concerned with the identity of the *guardians*: it is knowledge of them which is crucial for passage.

6. GOSPEL OF PHILIP APUD EPIPHANIUS, PANARION 26.13.2-3

Epiphanius preserves a fragment of a work which he calls the *Gospel of Philip*, though disconcertingly, it seems to have nothing to do with the Coptic *Gospel of Philip* which survives in Nag Hammadi Codex II. He attributes it to the "Gnostics." The fragment goes as follows:

The Lord revealed to me what the soul must say when it goes up into heaven, and how it must answer each of the powers above: "I have recognized myself" (it says) "and I have collected myself from everywhere, and I have not sown children for the archon, but I have uprooted his roots and collected the scattered members, and I know who you are. For I am" (it says) "one of those from above" (ἐγὼ γὰρ, φησὶ, τῶν ἀνωθέν εἰμι). And so (it says) it is released. But if (it says) it (*sc.* the soul) is

found to have begotten a son, it is kept down below, until it is able to bring up its own children and draw them up to itself.

Several features here resemble elements in texts already discussed. The journeying self is clearly a soul. There is no interrogation as such, although it is presupposed (“... how it must answer...”). The response of the soul concerns not the identities of the guards, but is a negative confession and a declaration of its identity. It has not served the archon, but has reassembled its own scattered constituent parts. It knows itself and its origin (ἄνωθεν).

7. PLOTINUS *ENNEADS* 2.9.14

Like Irenaeus and Origen, Plotinus’ school also has access to literature containing this motif, and Porphyry refers to the *hairesis* against which Plotinus writes as that of “the Gnostics.”²² Plotinus is no more complimentary to their kind of account of the soul’s ascent than are the Church Fathers:

For when they write their chants (ἐπαιδὰς γράφωσιν) to address the beings beyond – not only the soul but also those above – what are they producing but spells and enchantments and arm-twistings (γοητείας καὶ θέλξεις καὶ πείσεις)? They say that the powers obey and follow an instruction if anyone of us is sufficiently skilled to say the right things in the right way (ταδί καὶ οὕτωςί) – tunes and sounds and huffings and hissings from one’s voice (μέλη καὶ ἦχους καὶ προσπνεύσεις καὶ σιγμούς τῆς φωνῆς), and the other things which are written down (ὅσα ... γέγραπται) as having magical effect in the higher realm.

Noteworthy here is the fact that Plotinus himself (in addition to Porphyry) refers specifically to the Gnostics’ writings (γράφωσιν, γέγραπται). The varied language which he employs to describe the means of passage ranges from straightforward “words” to the expansion as “spells and enchantments and arm-twistings.” It needs, moreover, not just verbatim repetition from the manuals, but also to be accompanied by the correct sound effects, such as “their voices’ tunes and sounds and huffings and hissings.” Plotinus is certainly not opposed to the idea of the soul’s ascent, which is integral to his philosophy. He rejects, however, the idea that beings in the higher realm could be influenced by words and noises.

²² See the references to the refutations by Plotinus’ students of Gnostic works in Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 16. In the same place, Porphyry refers to the Gnostics as αἰρετικοί, i.e. members of a (philosophical) school.

8. *PISTIS SOPHIA* 112

Another passage commonly adduced as containing the motif comes in the *Pistis Sophia*:

Jesus continued with the word and said: "If there is also a soul which has not listened to the counterfeit spirit in all his [i.e. the latter's] works, and has been good and has received the mysteries of light which are in the second space, or those which are in the third space and are within: when the time (of the coming forth) of that soul out of the body is fulfilled, the counterfeit spirit follows that soul. He, with Destiny, follows it on the way on which it travels upward.

"But before it is far from the height, it [i.e. the soul] speaks the mystery of the releasing of the seals (**ἸΝΕΣΦΡΑΓΙΣ**) and all the bonds of the counterfeit spirit, with which the archons bound him [i.e. the spirit counterpart] to the soul. And when they are spoken, the bonds of the counterfeit spirit are released, he ceases to come into that soul, and he releases the soul..."²³

So in its earthly existence, the soul is shackled primarily not to the body but to "the counterfeit spirit" (**ΠΑΝΤΙΜΙΜΟΝ ΨΗΝΕΥΜΑ**), which is a dangerously bad influence. Subsequently, in order to free itself from this spirit, the soul must speak the prescribed mystery or mysteries.²⁴ Here, unlike in *2 Jeu* 52 below, the seals are negative.

9. *2 JEU* 52

2 Jeu 52 consists of a highly formulaic repetition of a paragraph each time the ascending soul reaches a different aeon. While there is some variation for special aeons, the text of the first paragraph is reproduced in the majority of cases (aeons 1–5 and 7–11), with only very slight variations:

When you come forth from the body and reach the *N*th aeon, and the archons of that aeon come before you, seal yourselves with this seal (**ΣΦΡΑΓΙΖΕ ΜΗΩΤΗ ΝΤΕΙΣΦΡΑΓΙΣ**): [A diagram follows] This is its name: X. Say it once only. Hold this cipher: Y, in your two hands (**ΑΜΑΖΤΕ ΝΤΕΙΦΗΦΟΣ ΖΗ-ΤΕΤΝΟΙΧ ΣΝΤΕ**). When you have finished sealing yourself with this seal and you have said its name once only, speak these defences (**ΝΕΙΑΠΟΛΟΓΙΑ**): "Withdraw, A B C, archons of the *N*th aeon, because I call upon (**†-ΕΠΙΚΑΛΕΙ**) D, E, F." But when the archons of the *N*th aeon hear these names, they will be very afraid and they will withdraw and flee to the west to the left, and you will ascend.²⁵

²³ Text from Schmidt and MacDermot 1978b, 286 (p. 572).

²⁴ There is a problem in the text: as will be seen from the translation, "mystery" initially is singular, but latterly the reference ("when *they* are spoken") is plural.

²⁵ Text from Schmidt and MacDermot 1978a, 127 (p. 182).

Oddly enough, the standard edition and translation (Schmidt/MacDermot) does not provide the names and numbers in the English version. The variations are as follows for each aeon:²⁶

<i>Seal name</i>	<i>Cipher</i>	<i>Archons A B C</i>	<i>Invocations D E F</i>
1 Zōzezē	1119	Prote(th), Persomphōn, Chous	Ēaza, Zēōzaz, Zōzezōz
2 Thōzōaz	2219	Chouncheōch	Ēzaōz, Zōēza, Zōozaz
3 Zōzēaz	3349	Ialdabaōth, Chouchō	Zōzēzaz, Zaōzōz, Chōzōz
4 Azōzēō	4555	Samaēlō, Chōchōchoucha	Zōzēza, Chōzōzazza, Zazēzō
5 Azēōza	5369	Ialthō, Aiōka, Nsōal	Zōmaēōzējoaz Zō..ōōzē
6 Zachōō- ōmazoz	6915	Zōzaōcha, Chōzōazaō, Obaōth	Zōzēaza, Chōzazaz, Achōzōēz
7 Chōzōph- razaz	7889	Chōzōazachō, Iazō	Zōēzō, Zachōzō, Zēazō
8 Zōxaōz	8054	Iaō (A)sachō, Aōeiō	Zaaazōz, Zēiō, Zēaz, Ō?ōōzōaz
9 Zōphrakas	2889	Bōzēōth, Ōzai, Ēxanatha	Zōē, Zōza, Ēzēzēzōz, Chōzōēz
10 Thōzaōz	4559	Ōbathōi, Oōsaō(th), Thōiaz	Jēōzazi, Ōōzōzōaz, Chōzōzaz
11 Zōxazē	5558	Ageōne, Zōteōz, Zēseōn	Ēōazaē, Zaēzōz, Chōzamaō
12 Zphrka...a	9885	Charbuōthō, Arzōza, Zazaxaōth	Zēēzō, Zaōz, Chōzōaz, Achazōē
13 Zaxapharas	8855	[names of 24 emanations of God]	[23 names of the Treasury of light]
14 Zōezōzē- iazach	8869	unnamed powers of the second God	Zōōzēaz, Achōēzō, Zēēē, Zōazēz
? Zōōezōēzaiō	5555	the three archons of that place	Zōezēazechōezōē, Ōezēaz, Eiōzēāō, Zazēō, Zazēōzō

As was the case in the Ophite diagram, the seals, ciphers, namings, and invocations in *2 Jeu* here have nothing to do with the identity, origin or destination of the journeying soul. Rather, the defenses are particular

²⁶ Sometimes when reference to the archons is repeated, different names are given (as e.g. in the eleventh and twelfth aeons); in this case, only the first set of names is given in the table.

to each aeon, and relate to (a) naming and thus having power over the hostile archons there, and (b) to the positive forces to be invoked: it is more a matter of naming the archons and thus having power over them. Again, there are no questions involved; rather, the archons merely confront the soul. There is overlap with the idea in the *Apocalypse of Paul* and the Ophite diagram that one needs a visual sign. Here in 2 *Jeu* the situation is more complex, since one bears not only the seal with its image, but also a cipher or pebble inscribed with a number “in your two hands.” There is also similarity with the ἀπολύτρωσις ritual in Irenaeus, where the language of “invocation” is used (cf. *AH* 1.21.5), and this has a similar effect on the archons: as in Irenaeus “when those in the entourage of the demiurge hear these words, they are greatly agitated,” so here in 2 *Jeu*, “when the archons of the *N*th aeon hear these names, they will be very afraid.”

10. GOSPEL OF THOMAS 49–50

Finally, we reach a passage which is contested in this regard, but which should also be taken as an example of this tradition:²⁷

49.1 Jesus said, “Blessed are the solitary and elect, for you will find the Kingdom.

49.2 For from it you are, and you will return there again.”

50.1 Jesus said, “If they say to you, ‘From where have you come?’ (ἸΤΑΤΕΤῆ-
ΦΩΠΕ ΕΒΟΛ ΤΩΝ), say to them, ‘We have come from the light where the light
came into being of its own accord and establi[shed itself] and appeared in/
through their image.’

50.2 If they say to you, ‘Is it you?’ (ἸΤΩΤῆ ΠΕ), say, ‘We are its children and we
are the elect of the living father.’

50.3 If they ask you, ‘What is the sign of your father in you?’ (ΟΥ ΠΕ ΠΜΑΕΙΝ
ἸΠΕΤῆΙΩΤ ΕΤῆΝΤΗΥΤῆ), say to them, ‘It is motion and rest.’”

Although, as we have noted, Rudolph did not consider this passage in his list, various scholars such as Patterson have taken this to be an instance of the familiar “Gnostic” motif of post-mortem ascent past hostile archons.²⁸ DeConick, however, has argued strongly for the view that interpreting *Thomas* against the background of passages like those discussed above does not do justice to the ecstatic theology dominating the rest of the work.²⁹ In particular, *Gos. Thom.* 50 must be read in the light of *Gos. Thom.* 59, where Jesus says, “Take heed of the Living One while you are alive, lest you die and seek to see him and be unable to do so.” As

²⁷ On the passage in general, see Vielhauer 1964; Trevijano Etcheverría 1993.

²⁸ Patterson 1993, 200. ²⁹ De Conick 1996, 43–99.

such DeConick argues that *Gos. Thom.* 50 should be taken to refer to ante-mortem mystical experience. There are reasons to question whether the saying can be limited to this sphere, however.

First, a number of the passages discussed above may themselves be concerned *both* with post-mortem ascent *and* with ecstatic experience. Scholars have commented on the ambiguity of works such as the *Gospel of Mary*, where (as we have already noted), it is not always easy to determine whether mystical experience or post-mortem ascent is in view. We do not necessarily need to choose between the two, though there may of course be grounds to do so in particular cases.

Second, in terms of internal factors, it is far from clear that *Gos. Thom.* 59 should have the controlling influence that DeConick suggests: the saying does not, in any case, rule out a post-mortem encounter with “the Living One,” rather, this is only possible for those who have already sought him in life. In fact, the one saying in *Thomas* which is designed to have a controlling influence on the collection as a whole is the programmatic statement in *Gos. Thom.* 1, where Jesus says: “Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death.” Situated where it is, this statement clearly concerns the purpose of the collection, hence the repetition later of “not tasting death” (*Gos. Thom.* 18–19; cf. 85, and “not seeing death” in *Gos. Thom.* 111). As such, it is a much better framework for the interpretation of the work as a whole than is *Gos. Thom.* 59. *Gos. Thom.* 50 makes very good sense, both in the light of the rest of *Thomas*, and in the light of the other passages we have discussed in this chapter, as concerning the escape of the soul after the death of the body (as well as, perhaps, before), so that the true self continues to live.

The questions

The questions posed to the Thomasine disciples are three: whence? who? and what sign do you possess?

The whence question is found in several places: the *First Apocalypse of James* and the *Gospel of Mary* are noteworthy parallels because they connect “whence” and “whither” very closely. This is also relevant to the discussion of *Gos. Thom.* 50, because of the related previous saying (*Gos. Thom.* 49). The same is true in the *Apocalypse of Paul*, in which the two questions appear in sequence (*Ap. Paul* 23.2 and 23.11).

The “who” question is also common in the literature which we have examined. Here in *Gos. Thom.* 50, however, it is phrased rather oddly and/or has suffered in textual transmission (“Is it you?”). In any case, the answer

makes the point clear, and even as the question stands we are clearly dealing with identity. This question is also central to the ἀπολύτρωσις ritual, and is explicit in the *First Apocalypse of James*.

The question of “the sign (σημεῖον) of the Father in you” is more distinctive to *Thomas*, though, as we have seen, a striking number of works exhibit a concern with visual symbols. In the *Apocalypse of Paul*, the apostle is in possession of a sign (σημεῖον) which the Spirit instructs him to give to the Old Man to secure passage upwards. *2 Jeu* similarly envisages the ascending soul as possessing for each aeon a seal and a pebble with an inscribed cipher (σφραγίς, ψήφος). Origen’s account of the Ophite diagram is replete with references to various kinds of symbol (σύμβολον): these appeals to the archons also appeal to the grace of the Father. Clement may be polemicizing against this idea in his reference to the true Christian who can show the symbol, or stamp (σύμβολον, χαρακτήρα) of good works to the angels (*Strom.* 4.116.2).

The answers

As far as the answers to the “whence” question are concerned, we saw that in several places identity and origin are collapsed into one. In Epiphanius’ *Gospel of Philip*, the soul claims, “I am one of those from above.” The *First Apocalypse of James* and the ἀπολύτρωσις ritual in Irenaeus does similarly (“I am a Son from the Father ...”). The *Apocalypse of Paul* has a quirky answer which makes the whole interrogation rather incoherent; the *Gospel of Mary* speaks of the soul’s descent prior to its ascent. The *Gospel of Thomas*, however, has a comparatively elaborate answer: “We have come from the light where the light came into being of its own accord and establi[shed itself] and appeared through their image.” The first part of the description is straightforward enough: the place is the uncreated primordial light which later in the *Gospel of Thomas* (*Gos. Thom.* 77) is identified with Jesus himself. (The first item in Origen’s account of the diagram notes that the soul is “already part of the light of the Son and the Father.”) Subsequently, however, the character of the light’s “appearing,” the force of the preposition “in”/ “through” (ἐν), the identity of the “they” (the possessors of the image) and the nature of the image are all much more complex. A fuller interpretation than is possible here would be needed to answer all these questions.

The identity of the interrogated is at the same time thoroughly Thomasine, while also redolent of the language in other passages discussed above. The “sons/children of light” and the “elect of the Father” titles are

mutually reinforcing. The combination stresses the exclusivity of those privileged with a divine origin of a particular kind.

The sign possessed by the elect disciple in *Gos. Thom.* 50 (“motion and rest”) is again stamped by the theology of *Thomas* as a whole, though the motion/rest (κίνησις/στάσις) opposition had been a topic of discussion since the pre-Socratics, with Plato’s *Sophist* especially thematizing it. *Thomas* characteristically argues that the true disciple embodies the unity of what might otherwise be considered conflicting principles (cf. *Gos. Thom.* 22 etc.).

Summary

Of course in many of the theological specifics, *Thomas*’ dialogue here does not correspond exactly to the other passages discussed above – any more than the different accounts above are identical to each other. In terms of form, however, it is clear that *Gos. Thom.* 50 belongs in this group of interrogations on the way to paradise. *Thomas* combines both prescription from Jesus (“When/if they ask you . . .”) with the actual dialogue itself – a dialogue concerned with the themes of origin and identity, but also with elements of visuality as well.

CONCLUSION

Where does *Thomas* fit on a spectrum encompassing the varying degrees of complexity in the accounts above? And to which of the parallels is *Thomas* closest? The description in the *Ascension of Isaiah* – at one end of the spectrum – is certainly not nearly so developed as that in *2 Jeu* (with its symbols, numbers, and names of both positive and negative powers) or with that reflected in Plotinus, where particular cantillation is envisaged. Thereafter, one can divide the passages roughly into those which are concerned with knowledge of the identity of the archon to be passed, and those which deal with the identity and origin of the ascending soul. In the former group belong the Ophite diagram and *2 Jeu*, in the latter are the “redemption” rituals in Irenaeus and the *First Apocalypse of James*, the *Apocalypse of Paul*, and the *Gospel of Philip* in use by Epiphanius’ Gnostics. The *Gospel of Thomas* is closest to this latter group, and especially with the redemption ritual with its emphasis on the identity of sonship from the Father. *Thomas* (especially when one combines *Gos. Thom.* 49 and 50) shares with these a focus on return to one’s origin, a theme also prominent in the *Gospel of Mary*, although *Mary* contains more expansive knowledge, not just of the soul or of the powers faced, but also cosmological

knowledge, especially about the destruction of all things. This is not to suggest that *Thomas* should be connected with Irenaeus' Marcosians, Epiphanius' Heracleonites or those (Valentinians?) who produced the *First Apocalypse of James*, but merely that *Gos. Thom.* 49–50 share a literary pattern and theological themes with the passages there, and may well have had a historical connection of some kind. *Thomas* goes beyond the redemption ritual, however, in including possession of a sign, where it has more in common with the *Apocalypse of Paul*, the Ophite diagram, and 2 *Jeu*, making any simple explanation of the sources of *Gos. Thom.* 49–50 impossible.

PART II

Contemporizing paradise in late antiquity

*Tertullian's law of paradise (Adversus Iudaeos 2):
reflections on a shared motif in Jewish
and Christian literature*

Sabrina Inowlocki

For both Jews and Christians, Genesis 2 is an important place for the discussion of natural law. The precept given at 2.16–17 was interpreted as a first manifestation of the divine law and its relationship to later forms of legislation was to be made explicit. One of the most influential theories was that of Augustine, who situated the law of nature in the pre-lapsarian age. But before Augustine, Tertullian of Carthage had proposed an important, albeit less influential, treatment of the question of the law of paradise.¹ Indeed, in his *Adversus Iudaeos*, Tertullian exploits Genesis 2.16–17 in the context of a Jewish-Christian polemic based on the question of the law. The originality of this treatment requires clarification because it may provide further insights not only into his view of paradise but also into his conception of the relationship between law and revelation, as well as on Jewish and Christian biblical exegesis. In this paper, I shall suggest that chapter 2 of *Adversus Iudaeos* constitutes an original redeployment of Jewish traditions for polemic purposes.

Tertullian's *Adversus Iudaeos* has often been neglected in modern scholarship because of its doubtful authorship and poor literary quality.² However, G. Dunn recently closed the gap by providing a rhetorical analysis of the treatise which supports its authenticity and textual integrity.³ He convincingly argues that this work is no mere rhetorical exercise but that it has multiple purposes,⁴ i.e. to demonstrate the correctness of the Christian faith as well as to provide Christians with arguments to use in debate with Jews. The primary audience would have been Christian. In addition, Dunn supports that the *Adversus Iudaeos* is earlier than *Adversus*

¹ On Tertullian in general, see Barnes 1985; Osborn 1997; Dunn 2004.

² For bibliography, see Fredouille 1972, 254 n. 92; Schreckenberg 1995, 217; Aziza 1977, 107, and Dunn 2008, chapter 1. However, over the last few years, many studies on the *Adversus Iudaeos* have been published by G. Dunn. See, e.g., Dunn 1998, 1999a, 1999b, 2000, 2002, 2003, and most recently Dunn 2008.

³ Dunn 2008. ⁴ Dunn 2008, chapter 2.

Marcionem.⁵ He agrees with the idea that the *Adversus Judaeos* would have been written early on in Tertullian's career, around 195–96 AD.⁶

We know that there was an important Jewish community in Carthage.⁷ In the Talmud, several Rabbis are said to have lived there and the city is counted among the four great centers of Jewish learning; Rabbi Akiba and Rabbi Levi allegedly visited North Africa, and it is likely that they went to Carthage. The importance of the community is supported by the archaeological findings.

The question whether Tertullian had contacts with Jews is still debated.⁸ According to some,⁹ in contrast to Origen, Tertullian betrays no sign of personal acquaintance with actual Jews; others reach opposite conclusions.¹⁰ Dunn suggests that the encounter set up at the beginning of the treatise is not supposed to have actually occurred.¹¹ As other Christian authors, Tertullian shows little evidence of acquaintance with actual Jews but this does not preclude the possibility of such encounters.

Because of the alleged mildness of Tertullian towards the Jews, Fredouille concludes that the treatise was really destined for a Jewish readership.¹² Tertullian would have sought to convince, rather than attack, those who considered the Christians a heretical offshoot of Judaism. But Tertullian's mildness is certainly disputable and I doubt that any solid argument can be based on it. Dunn's argument for a direct Christian readership and an indirect Jewish readership seems to me more convincing.¹³

As far as the structure of the work is concerned, Dunn sees chapter 2 as part of the *refutatio* (2.1b–6.1). Yet this *refutatio* comes before the *confirmatio*: Tertullian has creatively inverted the rhetorical pattern of the *confirmatio* and *refutatio*.¹⁴ The main argument of the passage is the temporary character of the law.

At the beginning of chapter 2, Tertullian aims to first show that the Jews are not the elected people: according to him, God, the sower (*sator*)

⁵ See his reasoning in chapter 3.

⁶ *Contra* Fredouille 1972, 487 who dates it around 198–206 AD.

⁷ For background information see, e.g., Aziza 1977 and Frend 1978.

⁸ See e.g., Horbury 1998, with bibliography. According to Horbury, this passage suggests that contemporary Judaism was not unimportant for Tertullian. A case in point is the possible influence of the treatise *'Abodah zarah* on Tertullian's *De Idololatria*. On this issue, see Stroumsa 1998; Binder forthcoming (I am grateful to Stéphanie Binder for letting me see her dissertation before submission).

⁹ E.g. Barnes 1985, 92–93.

¹⁰ E.g. Aziza 1977, 156–217; Dunn 2008, chapters 1–2.

¹¹ Dunn 2008, chapter 1.

¹² Fredouille 1972, 267–71.

¹³ Dunn 2008, chapter 1. He argues that had a pagan audience been targeted, more philosophical arguments would have been used; the comparison with Justin's *Dialogue* and *Apologies* show the weight of such an argument.

¹⁴ Dunn 1999a, 318; cf. Sider 1971, 21–40.

of all the people of the earth who created the universe did not provide with the law the Jews only, but also all the peoples of the universe. In fact,

*omnibus gentibus eandem legem dedit, quam certis statutis temporibus observari praecepit, quando voluit et per quos voluit et sicut voluit. Namque in principio mundi ipsius Adae et Evae legem dedit, ne de fructu arboris plantatae in medio paradisi ederent; quod si contra fecissent, morte morerentur. Quae lex eis sufficeret, si esset custodita. [3] In hac enim lege Adae data omnia praecepta condita recognoscimus quae postea pullulaverunt data per Moysen, id est: Diliges dominum deum tuum de toto corde tuo et ex tota anima tua, et: Diliges proximum tibi tamquam te, et: Non occides, non moechaberis, non fraudaberis, falsum testimonium non dices, honora patrem tuum et matrem, et: Alienum non concupisces. [4] Primordialis enim lex est data Adae et Evae in paradiso quasi matrix omnium praeceptorum dei. Denique si dominum deum suum dilexissent, contra praeceptum eius non fecissent; si proximum diligerent id est semetipsos, persuasioni serpentis non credidissent atque ita in semetipsos homicidium non commisissent, excidendo de immortalitate faciendo contra dei praeceptum.*¹⁵

He gave to all nations the self-same law, which at definite and stated times He enjoined should be observed, when He willed, and through whom He willed, and as He willed. For in the beginning of the world He gave to Adam himself and Eve a law, that they were not to eat of the fruit of the tree planted in the midst of paradise; but that, if they did contrariwise, by death they were to die. Which law had continued enough for them, had it been kept.^[3] For in this law given to Adam we recognise hidden all the precepts which afterwards sprouted forth when given through Moses; that is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God from thy whole heart and out of thy whole soul; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; False witness thou shalt not utter; Honour thy father and mother; and, That which is another's, shall thou not covet.^[4] For the primordial law was given to Adam and Eve in paradise, as the womb of all the precepts of God.¹⁶

After explaining how Adam and Eve transgressed all these commandments by eating the fruit, Tertullian concludes:

*Igitur in hac generali et primordiali dei lege, quam in arboris fructu observari deus sanxerat, omnia praecepta legis posterioris specialiter indita fuisse cognoscimus, quae suis temporibus edita germinaverunt.*¹⁷

Therefore, in this general and primordial law of God, the observance of which, in the case of the tree's fruit, He had sanctioned, we recognise enclosed all the precepts specially of the posterior Law, which germinated when disclosed at their proper times.

¹⁵ *Adv. Jud.* 2.2–4. The Latin text is that of Tränkle 1964.

¹⁶ All the English translations of the treatise are those of the ANF, occasionally modified by me.

¹⁷ *Adv. Jud.* 2.6.

The nature of the *lex primordialis* is further explained by Tertullian in the same chapter.¹⁸ Before the Ten Commandments were written down on stone tablets, this law existed, which was unwritten (*non scriptam*); it was understood in a natural way (*intellegebatur naturaliter*) by the Fathers, who observed (*custodiebatur*) it. This law is the natural law (*lex naturalis*) whose justice (*iustitia*) guided Noah, Abraham, and Melchisedek.

In sections 9–10, Tertullian elaborates on the development of this unique law, from Adam to the Christians: according to him, the law of Horeb is not the first one,

sed antiquiorem primum in paradiso, post deinde patriarchis atque ita et Iudaeis certis temporibus datam quando voluit et certis temporibus reformatam, ut non iam ad Moysi legem ita adtendamus quasi ad principalem legem, sed ad subsequentem quam certo tempore deus et gentibus exhibuit [et] repromissam per prophetas et in melius reformavit et praemonuit futurum, ut, sicuti certo tempore data est lex per Moysen, ita temporaliter observata et custodita credatur^[10] *Nec adimamus hanc dei potestatem pro temporum condicione legis praecepta reformantem in hominis salutem.*

but first in paradise (was) a more ancient (law), subsequently given at definite periods, when he wished, to the patriarchs, and so again to the Jews, and reformed at definite periods: so that we are not to give heed to Moses' Law as to the primitive law, but as to a subsequent, which at a definite period God has set forth to the Gentiles too and, after repeatedly promising so to do through the prophets, has reformed for the better; and has premonished that it should come to pass that, just as "the law was given through Moses" at a definite time, so it should be believed to have been temporarily observed and kept. And let us not annul this power which God has, which reforms the law's precepts answerably to the circumstances of the times, with a view to man's salvation.

Again, Tertullian closes chapter 2 with a list of pre-Christian just patriarchs who did not respect the Law of Moses, as they were ignorant of the circumcision and the Sabbath. Adam is mentioned first, before Noah, Enoch, Abel, Melchizedek, and Lot. The latter is cited as one who had been allowed to be a colonist of paradise, albeit uncircumcised, and who was not even circumcised after his sin by way of purification.

When one compares Tertullian's treatment of the law in the *Adversus Iudaeos* to that of other apologists and *Adversus Iudaeos* writers, one is struck by the originality of his argument. Justin Martyr, for instance, also argues that Adam was not born circumcised, and that neither were Abel, Enoch, Lot, Noah, Melchizedek; he accounts for the existence of a natural law before the Law of Moses.¹⁹ But if the Jews received the Law through Moses, it is because they erred and sinned, and committed injustice and

¹⁸ *Adv. Jud.* 2.7. ¹⁹ *Dial.* 19.2–4; 23.5; 45.4; 46.3.

idolatry. Justin opposes the Law given on the Horeb, which was destined to the Jews only, because of their idolatrous practices, and the eternal and ultimate law (*aiônios kai teleutaïos nomos*), the law of Christ which is universal: after this law, there will be no other law, no ordinance, no prescription (*nomos, prostagma, entolè*).²⁰ Yet Justin neither elaborates on the eternal character of the universal law nor on its beginnings in paradise. When he mentions Adam and Eve in the *Dialogue*, he speaks about their disobedience.²¹ The Mosaic Law is pre-dated, however, by the law of circumcision given to Abraham.²² As is well known, Justin presents it as a *sèmeion* for the banishment of the Jews from Jerusalem in his own time, a tradition also used by Tertullian in the *Adversus Iudaeos* 3. But nowhere do we find an argument similar to that used by Tertullian in the *Adversus Iudaeos*.

For Irenaeus,²³ just as there are four regions in the world, four winds, four gospels, four cherubim, there are four covenants: with Noah, Abraham, Moses and that of the Gospel, which renews mankind and recapitulates everything in itself.²⁴ Adam is absent from this fourfold covenant. Irenaeus further explains that from the beginning, God provided mankind with natural prescriptions, which he implanted in them²⁵ through the Decalogue, having no further request from those who wished to follow his way.²⁶ Because they became idolatrous in the desert, after their release from Egypt, He imposed other prescriptions on the Jews, which would not separate them from God, but would subjugate them. The pre-Mosaic just ones such as Abraham, Lot, Noah, and Enoch, did not need those written prescriptions because they had the contents of the Decalogue inscribed in their hearts. They loved God and refrained from injustice. The Decalogue aimed to prepare mankind to life. The Gospel continued, increased – but by no means abolished – the law, through the incarnation of Christ.²⁷ Therefore, although Irenaeus draws a connection between the Decalogue and the natural law implanted in the hearts of the patriarchs, he neither deals with the law of paradise nor with Adam and Eve in particular.

As G. Dunn has pointed out, Ps.-Barnabas' theory of the legal dispensation also greatly differs from that of Tertullian. According to him, only the law of Jesus is a valid law, for the covenant through Moses was broken because of the golden calf.²⁸

²⁰ *Dial.* 11.1–2. ²¹ *Dial.* 12.4.4, cf. 100.5. ²² E.g. *Dial.* 16.2.

²³ On Irenaeus' theology of history, see, e.g. Daniélou 1947.

²⁴ *Haer.* 3.11.8. ²⁵ Cf. *Roms* 2: 15. ²⁶ *Haer.* 4.15–16.

²⁷ For this whole passage, see *Haer.* 4.16.2–5.

²⁸ *Barn.* 4.1–8, cf. Dunn 1999a, 324.

Thus Tertullian's account of the law proves to be very different from other early Christian accounts. The Mosaic law is not excluded from the salvation history as being a punishment for idolatrous Jews. It is part and parcel of a natural development that led to the new law. Yet this argument is found nowhere else in his other works.²⁹ Even in the *Adversus Marcionem*, in which Tertullian needs to stress the continuity between the two laws, he does not use the same argument as in *Adversus Judaeos* 2.

Most scholars have concluded to the originality of Tertullian,³⁰ without going any further. This may be due to the general acceptance that Tertullian was ignorant of real Jews and of rabbinic traditions. A. Momigliano, for example, agreed with T. D. Barnes that Tertullian was not familiar with Jewish rabbinic thought.³¹ Only C. Aziza and G. Dunn suggested that the *Adversus Judaeos* reflected some real exchanges with the Jews.³² In my opinion, the originality of Tertullian's treatment can be explained by the fact that *Adversus Judaeos* 2 is not a typical Christian argument but an answer to or a reworking of a specifically Jewish argument. I will come back to this shortly.

But first we need to clarify the meaning and the function of the metaphor used by Tertullian. As we have seen, Tertullian uses two metaphors: that of the biological development of plants and that of the *matrix*, the womb/mother. Obviously, the two metaphors are interrelated, since the vegetal metaphor is generally used in order to describe animal sexuality and reproduction.

J.-Cl. Fredouille has rightly noted that in the passage on the law, Tertullian attempts to adapt a doctrine of the ages of the world ("les âges du monde") inherited from Justin and Irenaeus to a stoic conceptual framework.³³ The metaphor of the seed is both Stoic and biblical but in this passage, J.-Cl. Fredouille suggested, there are no biblical references.³⁴ This is not entirely true. It seems reasonable to assume that the vegetal metaphor is inspired by the biblical context of the sin itself: the tree, which is at the core of the *lex primordialis*, naturally leads to a vegetal metaphor. Likewise, the link between the fruit, sexuality, and childbearing in Genesis may have suggested the metaphor of the *matrix*. The stoic metaphor of the vegetal development may be summarized as follows: the seed potentially

²⁹ For his views on the Jewish law, see *Pud.* 5.2; *Spec.* 2.8; 3.2; *Mon.* 7.7; *Scorp.* 2.3; *Cult.* 2.2.5; *Cor.* 11.1; *An.* 38.3; *Adv. Marc.* 1.23.4; 1.29.4; 2.4.6; 2.17.4; 4.27.4; 4.35.3; 4.36.5; 5.4.11–12; 5.14.11; 5.17.15; 5.18.13.

³⁰ See e.g. Fredouille 1972, 260; Dunn 1999a, 325.

³¹ See A. Momigliano's review of Barnes in *JRS* 66, 1976, 273–76.

³² See *supra*. ³³ Fredouille 1972, 256. ³⁴ Fredouille 1972, 257 n. 95.

contains in itself all the characters which will later become visible in the plant. Such a metaphor is found in other treatises.

Earlier in the *De anima*, Tertullian provides a lengthy comparison between the growth of a tree – an example taken from Aristotle – and the human capacity of knowledge in the soul: “Trees, therefore, have ability or knowledge; and they derive it from whence they also derive vitality – that is, from the one source of vitality and knowledge which is peculiar to their nature, and that from the infancy which they, too, begin with.” Just like trees, the “soul (which may be compared with the nascent sprout of a tree) has been derived from Adam as its root (*matrix*), and has been propagated (*pullulauit*) amongst his posterity by means of woman, to whom it has been entrusted for transmission, and thus has sprouted into life with all its natural apparatus, both of intellect and of sense.”³⁵

Even though the context is different, the vocabulary and the reference to Adam makes the passage useful for the purpose of comparison: it may be deduced from this passage that, just as the quality of the tree goes back to one source and just as the nature of human soul goes back to Adam's soul, the essence of the laws subsequent to that of paradise is the same as the law of paradise itself; one may even suggest that just as the nature of the soul is identical but nevertheless influenced by its surrounding,³⁶ the laws posterior to the law of paradise are identical to it but reformed according to God's plan for the circumstances of the times.³⁷

Along the same line, the biological metaphor is used by Tertullian to describe his view of historical progress.³⁸ It is paralleled by the metaphor of the human development and of the development of justice in the *De virginitate* 1.9–10.³⁹

Aspice ipsam creaturam paulatim ad fructum promoveri: granum est primo et de grano frutex oritur et de frutice arbuscula enititur, deinde rami et frondes invalescunt et totum arboris nomen expanditur, inde germinis tumor et flos de germine solvitur et de flore fructus aperitur; is quoque rudis aliquamdiu et informis paulatim aetatem suam dirigens eruditur in mansuetudinem saporis. [10] Sic et iustitia – nam idem deus iustitiae et creaturae – primo fuit in rudimentis, natura deum metuens, dehinc per legem et prophetas promovit in infantiam, dehinc per evangelium efferebuit in iuventutem, nunc per paracletum componitur in maturitatem.

Look how creation itself advances little by little to fructification. First comes the grain, and from the grain arises the shoot, and from the shoot struggles out the shrub: thereafter boughs and leaves gather strength, and the whole that we

³⁵ *De anima* 19.6. ³⁶ Cf. *De anima* 20. ³⁷ *Adversus Iudaeos* 2.9–10.

³⁸ Daniélou 1991, 184–85 and Fredouille 1972, 256–58, 286, 292–93.

³⁹ Cf. Brabander 2007, 153.

call a tree expands: then follows the swelling of the germen, and from the germen bursts the flower, and from the flower the fruit opens: that fruit itself, rude for a while, and unshapely, little by little, keeping the straight course of its development, is trained to the mellowness of its flavour. ^[10]So, too, righteousness – for the God of righteousness and of creation is the same – was first in a rudimentary state, having a natural fear of God: from that stage it advanced, through the Law and the Prophets, to infancy; from that stage it passed, through the Gospel, to the fervour of youth: now, through the Paraclete, it is settling into maturity.

Therefore, in the *Adversus Judaeos*, Tertullian resorts to a terminology that he commonly exploits in order to express the dynamics of salvation history (here with montanist overtones). It implies natural growth and progress.

The two passages from the *De anima* and the *De virginitate* also shed light on Tertullian's use of the metaphor as a rhetorical strategy. The metaphor is not descriptive but constructive: it enables him to construct and authorize his discourse on old and new, on the Mosaic law and the Gospel. The implication of the metaphor is the exclusion of both so-called heterodoxical views such as those of Marcion, and outdated ways of life such as that of the Jews. The biological metaphor also enables him to solve the contradictions between the philosophical schemes of the natural, permanent law, on the one hand, and the changing character of the law on the other.

However, in the *Adversus Judaeos*, the relationship between the law of paradise and the subsequent laws is not as clear as in the passages examined above: on the one hand, Tertullian insists that the primordial law contained all the precepts of God that sprouted in the later law, that is, according to him, the Decalogue (or rather – his own octalogue⁴⁰); on the other, he mentions three different dispensations for the law: the natural law of paradise, which was subsequently *reformed* for the patriarchs, and then for the Jews. These two accounts raise two questions: (a) what is the relationship between the law of paradise, the natural law of the patriarchs, the Decalogue, and the Law of Moses? (b) More specifically, is the idea of progress assumed by Tertullian to be part of the development of the law as he seems to point out at 2.7 – which would imply that the Law of Moses represented a progress vis-à-vis the natural law of the patriarchs?

a. Because Tertullian proposes two different accounts of the legal dispensation up to the Law of Moses in *Adversus Judaeos* 2, it is not clear of which law the law of paradise is the seed. According to L. Ginzberg, it is

⁴⁰ See below.

that of the Ten Commandments.⁴¹ M. Spanneut,⁴² identifying the law of paradise with the law of nature, agrees with Ginzberg; for him, "le décalogue est une précision de la loi naturelle."⁴³ Fredouille understands that Tertullian refers to the Law of Moses in general.⁴⁴ According to him, the time before Christ is divided into two great periods: that of the natural law (which includes the primitive law and the law of the patriarchs), and that of the Law of Moses, which continues to progress from Moses to the prophets.⁴⁵ In Dunn's opinion, the law of paradise is identical to the law of nature obeyed by the patriarchs, of which the new law would be the restoration.⁴⁶

In fact, the problem is solved once one recognizes that there are two parts in Tertullian's reasoning in *Adversus Iudaeos* 2, which serve two different purposes: in the first part (2.1–7), Tertullian uses the issue of the law in order to undermine the Jewish claims of exclusivity based on divine election: according to him, the divine law is not embodied in the Mosaic law given exclusively to the Jews because in fact there is an earlier universal god-given law. This law is a natural, unwritten law, followed by the patriarchs. It is embodied in Tertullian's presentation of the Decalogue as a form of natural law. In the second part (2.8–9), Tertullian focuses on the issue of temporality. Here he uses the law of paradise to contend that the Mosaic law is not the *lex primordialis* but a *later*, reformed version of this *lex*. The idea of the *reformatio* is applied to the natural law of the patriarchs as well as the Law of Moses in order to demonstrate the *temporary* character of the Mosaic law. Therefore, the polemical context of the chapter, in which two different points (exclusivism and temporality) are discussed, may help us to solve the contradictions between the two accounts of the legal dispensation in chapter 2. The concept of *lex naturalis* is exploited in the context of a dialectic tension between exclusivism and universalism, while the *lex primordialis* is used in a chronological debate over the temporality of the law. This twofold discussion naturally leads to Tertullian's final claim in this chapter: the Mosaic law is not the *lex principalis*, which leaves room for the new law. This short analysis shows the importance of

⁴¹ Ginzberg 1909–38, notes on Adam in book 1, 92–93 n. 55.

⁴² Spanneut 1969, 15–16.

⁴³ Spanneut 1969, 16. He also notes that the importance of the idea of the development of the law, which is already present in Tertullian's first works, increases as he adheres to montanism and gives more and more importance to the revelations of the paraclet. Yet a closer examination of Tertullian's text challenges these interpretations.

⁴⁴ Fredouille 1972, 257. ⁴⁵ Fredouille 1972, 258.

⁴⁶ So e.g. Dunn 1999a, 321–22; Dunn 2008, 113.

the polemical context in order to understand Tertullian's presentation of the legal dispensation.

b. The biological metaphors used by Tertullian are paradoxically both helpful and ill-suited to his topic: the image of the womb and of the plant enables him to establish a continuity between the different stages of the development of the law, at the same time, allowing space for their differences. But the idea of progress is inherent to the image of biological growth. Thus it may be understood as stating that the Law of Moses is an improvement vis-à-vis the law of paradise and the natural law of the patriarchs, which is problematic in the light of Tertullian's praise of the "lawlessness" of the patriarchs later in the *Adversus Judaeos*. Yet a passage from the *De anima*⁴⁷ indicates that the metaphor of the seed does not necessarily imply progress:

Porro et frugum seminibus una generis cuiusque forma est, processus tamen uarii: alia integro statu euadunt, alia etiam meliora respondent, alia degenerant pro condicione caeli et soli, pro ratione operis et curae, pro temporum euentu, pro licentia casuum;

even the seeds of plants have, one form in each kind, but their development varies: some open and expand in a healthy and perfect state, while others either improve or degenerate, owing to the conditions of weather and soil, and from the appliance of labour and care; also from the course of the seasons, and from the occurrence of casual circumstances.⁴⁸

In chapter 2 of the *Adversus Judaeos*, Tertullian does not specify whether the development of the plant is for the best or for the worse. Thus there is no reason to assume that the law of paradise is superior or inferior to the Law of Moses.⁴⁹

Adversus Marcionem 4.11.11 may also be relevant to this discussion: dealing with the relationship between old and new, Tertullian claims:

Et tamen si concedimus separationem istam per reformationem, per amplitudinem, per profectum, sicut fructus separatur a semine, cum sit fructus ex semine, sic et euangelium separatur a lege, dum prouebitur ex lege, aliud ab illa, sed non alienum, diuersum, sed non contrarium.

But still we make this concession, that there is a separation, *by reformation*, by amplification, by progress; just as the fruit is separated from the seed, although the fruit comes from the seed. So likewise the gospel is separated from the law, whilst it advances from the law – a different thing from it, but not an alien one; diverse, but not contrary.

⁴⁷ Obviously, the context is not the same: Tertullian is here dealing with the development of the soul in the foetus, defending against Valentinus that the nature of the soul is one. On Tertullian's view of the soul, see Alexandre 2001, 227–78.

⁴⁸ *De anima* 20.2. ⁴⁹ As Dunn seems to imply in Dunn 2008, 113.

In this passage the metaphor of the fruit and the seed is used more explicitly in order to explain the nature of the relationship between the law and the gospel. As in the *Adversus Iudaeos*, the term *reformatio* is used in order to explain the modifications of the law. In this case, however, the notion of *reformatio* clearly implies the idea of progress without excluding the notion of a rupture.

This passage raises the question of the connection between old and new in Tertullian's thought. *Adversus Iudaeos* 2 has been used by different scholars to promote different opinions. In the view of Fredouille,⁵⁰ Tertullian clearly separates the new law from all the previous laws which were subject to the vegetal metaphor; according to him, the metaphor of the *matrix* could hardly be applied to the relation between the Mosaic law and the new law⁵¹: the innovative character of the evangelical law mattered too much to Tertullian for him to concede that new derived from old; in his opinion, Tertullian preferred to admit the duality of the two laws. According to Fredouille, who distinguishes between the biological metaphor and the comparison with the human laws, Tertullian had to give up on both explanations in order not to minimize the evangelical novelty.⁵² The claim of novelty, he argues, was more crucial to the *Adversus Iudaeos* than it is in any other *Adversus Iudaeos* treatise. However, for J. Alexandre,⁵³ there is a continuity between the two laws: citing *Adversus Iudaeos* 2.7, he asserts that each new period does not abrogate the former law but enlarges and improves upon it.

However, we should bear in mind that in the passage dealing with the law of paradise in the *Adversus Iudaeos*, Tertullian does not really tackle the question of the connection between the Mosaic law and the law of Christ. The main purpose of the passage is to show that the Law of Moses is neither the *lex primordialis* nor the *lex principalis*. Thus the polemical dimension of this passage is crucial to the discussion. Tertullian lays the ground for further discussion on the *lex principalis*, but it does not take place before chapter 3. In chapter 2, Tertullian seems to be content to restrict the discussion to the concept of *reformatio*: the Law of Moses sprouted somehow from the law of paradise, just as the natural law; it was given at a definite time, for definite purposes, but he does not tell us more. It is only at the very end of the chapter that he will start criticizing the Law of Moses as being embodied in the laws of the circumcision or the shabbath.

⁵⁰ Fredouille 1972, 266–67.

⁵² Fredouille 1972, 261.

⁵¹ Fredouille 1972, 257–58.

⁵³ Alexandre 2001, 402–03.

The fact that Tertullian, in *Adversus Iudaeos* 2.3–4, establishes a strong continuity between the law of paradise and the Decalogue and Mosaic law deserves further attention. It would surely have been easier to claim, as Justin or Irenaeus did, that the Mosaic law was given to the Jews because they had given in to idolatry. If this is what he implies when he mentions the reformation of the law for the Jews (2.9), why does he not make it more explicit at this stage? This point as well as the originality of the treatment of the divine laws as being hidden in the law of paradise may suggest that the passage should be understood against the background of a Jewish-Christian polemic. We shall now explore this hypothesis.

The Decalogue is at the heart of Tertullian's reasoning. It must be noted at the outset that he does not use the Decalogue as reported in the Torah.⁵⁴ Indeed, he does not give the exact list of the Ten Commandments: he starts with Matt. 22.37–40 (the two greatest commandments according to Jesus: the love of God and the love of the neighbour, which themselves refer to Deut. 6.5 and Lev. 19.18 respectively); he goes on with the interdiction of murder, adultery, theft, false witness, the respect due to the parents (cf. Mark 10.19), and he ends up with the interdiction to covet the neighbour's possession. Thus, he has excluded from the Ten Commandments the three first ones (idolatry, the interdiction of blasphemy, and, unsurprisingly, the observance of the Sabbath), which are defined in the Jewish tradition as the commandments attached to God;⁵⁵ he has replaced them with Jesus' summary of the commandments in the verses of Matthew. We are now left with eight commandments. He has also put the commandment related to the parents to the seventh place. Thus Tertullian has turned, as it were, the Decalogue into his own octalogue, which he brings into close line with natural precepts.

Like many of his co-religionists, Tertullian held the Decalogue in high esteem. The Decalogue enjoyed great consideration among the early Christians.⁵⁶ Before Tertullian, others had connected it to the law of nature.⁵⁷ But Tertullian was original in tracing it back to Gen. 2.16–17.

⁵⁴ Exod. 20.12–17; Deut. 5.6–21. Besides Ginzberg and Spanneut, see also Dunn 1999a, 321, who sees them as mere citations from the OT.

⁵⁵ He does the same in *Marc.* 4.36.4 referring to *priora praecepta*. See Philo, *Decal.* 50–51, 106–10, 121.

⁵⁶ See Grant 1947, 1 n.2.

⁵⁷ See e.g. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.15.1: "They (the Jews) had therefore a law, a course of discipline, and a prophecy of future things. For God at the first, indeed, warning them by means of natural precepts, which from the beginning He had implanted in mankind, that is, by means of the Decalogue (which, if any one does not observe, he has no salvation), did then demand nothing more of them. As Moses says in Deuteronomy, 'These are all the words which the Lord spake to the whole assembly of the sons of Israel on the mount, and He added no more; and He wrote them on two tables of stone, and gave them to me.'"

The Jews also interpreted Gen. 2.16–17 in relation to both natural laws (the Noahide laws) and the Mosaic law. May it be that Tertullian's theory was written in reaction to Jewish traditions about pre-Sinaitic laws? It has been argued that Jewish rabbinic texts on Adam's observance of the Commandments have to be understood in a Jewish-Christian polemic context.⁵⁸ Such claims should be taken with caution: anti-Christian polemics does not hide everywhere in Jewish literature, and neither does anti-Jewish polemics in Christian literature. Yet in this case, the possibility that the passage of Tertullian should be analyzed in the light of Jewish traditions on the patriarchs' obedience to the law prior to Sinai should at least be raised. In this passage, Tertullian may attempt to provide a Christian account of the pre-Sinaitic law alternative to the Jewish traditions and claims on this topic.

There are many Jewish parallels to the idea of a pre-Mosaic law going back to the origins of the world. The *Book of Jubilees* assumes that a system of laws was established at the time of creation;⁵⁹ it attests to a partial revelation before Sinai,⁶⁰ which enables a retrojection of the law into the patriarchal period.⁶¹ *Jubilees* does not ascribe to Adam and Eve a specific law, but certain laws are justified through their story, for example the length of the period of uncleanness of the woman after giving birth to a girl or a boy.⁶² The same retrojection of the law into the patriarchal period is found in the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*,⁶³ Sirach,⁶⁴ and 2 *Baruch*.⁶⁵ This kind of tradition also occurs in some rabbinic texts of the tannaitic and early amoraic period: according to them, the patriarchs fulfilled the precepts of the Torah.⁶⁶ Adam, like Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is said to have observed these precepts.⁶⁷ Abraham was an especially prominent figure in this respect because of Gen. 26.5. But the Rabbis interpreted

⁵⁸ E.g. Ginzberg 1909–38, notes on “Adam,” 1.93.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Jub.* 6.17–18: “For this reason it is ordained and written on the heavenly tablets, that they should celebrate the feast of weeks in this 18 month once a year, to renew the covenant every year. And this whole festival was celebrated in heaven from the day of creation till the days of Noah – twenty-six jubilees and five weeks of years.”

⁶⁰ *Jub.* 3.10; 4.5, 32; 6.17; 15.25–26; 16.29; 28.6; 32.10–11, 28; 33.10; 49.8; 50.13.

⁶¹ *Jub.* 7.3–5; 7.35–38; 13.25–27; 16.20–31 etc.

⁶² *Jub.* 3.8–14. ⁶³ E.g. *T. Levi* 9.6–7. ⁶⁴ Sir. 44.20 on Abraham.

⁶⁵ 2 *Bar.* 57.2 (“in the time of Abraham and his generations, the unwritten law existed and they fulfilled the commandments”).

⁶⁶ *b. Yoma* 28a; *m. Qidd.* 4.14. See also Urbach 1975, 335; Jacob studied fourteen years in the academy of Shem and Eber; he learnt the *halakhot* and transmitted them to Joseph (*Gen. Rab.* 68.5; cf. 11.7; 84.8; *S. 'Olam Rab.* 2; *b. Meg.* 17 a). Urbach says that even more commandments were ascribed by some *tannaim* to the patriarchs. See also Aziza 1977, 173.

⁶⁷ *Mek. d'Rabbi Ishmael*, Be-shallah, Petiḥa, p. 79; *Abot R. Nat.* version A, 4a; *b. 'Abod. Zar.* 8a; *Gen. Rab.* 11.7.

Gen. 2.15 (Adam was to keep the garden) as referring to the study of the Torah and the fulfillment of the commandments.⁶⁸ In some passages, the Ten Commandments are related to the ten words of which God made use at the creation.⁶⁹

Other rabbinic traditions did not assume that the patriarchs (including Adam) respected the pre-Sinaitic law, but rather turned them into Noahides.⁷⁰ Thus Gen. 2.16–17 was connected to the Noahide laws. It is worthy of note that the Noahide laws and the Decalogue overlap on three occasions: theft, murder, and sexual misconduct. The idea that six of the Noahide laws were already given to Adam,⁷¹ or that the Noahide laws are implicit in God's commandment in Gen. 2.16–17 is found in treatise *b. Sanhedrin* 56b: each word of the verse is interpreted in reference to a specific law. This exegetical interpretation of Gen. 2.16 may be brought closer to Tertullian's own interpretation at 2.3–5.⁷²

Obviously, the method of exegesis and the laws that are read into the verses differ but it is nevertheless remarkable that both the Rabbis and Tertullian founded their view of the legal dispensation through the exegesis of Gen. 2.16–17. Both connected some form of natural law (the Noahide laws for the Rabbis, the law of nature/Tertullian's version of the Decalogue) to the law of paradise.⁷³ Moreover, some rabbinic texts suggest that the number of laws were progressively increased after the Noahide laws were given to Adam: Adam received six commandments, Noah seven, Abraham eight, and Jacob nine, until God gave all of them to Israel.⁷⁴ The biological metaphor used by Tertullian also implies that the commandments were multiplied.

⁶⁸ Ginzberg 1909–38, 1.70–71 n. 54; *Sipre Deut.* 41; *Midrash Tannaim* 22; *Gen. Rab.* 16.5; *Pirqe R. El.* 12 etc.

⁶⁹ *Pirqe R. El.* 21, cf. *Lekah Deut.* 5.6; *Zohar* II 11b–12a.

⁷⁰ On these two approaches, see Schultz 1975.

⁷¹ *T. 'Abod. Zar.* 9.4; *b. Sanh.* 56a–b, 74b, *Ned.* 31a; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12.1; *Gen. Rab.* 16.6, 24.5, and also, on Noahide laws 26.1, 34.8; see also *Deut. Rab.* 2.25; and later, Yehuda HaLevi, *HaKuzari* 3.7.

⁷² “For the primordial law was given to Adam and Eve in paradise, as the womb of all the precepts of God. In short, if they had loved the Lord their God, they would not have contravened His precept; if they had habitually loved their neighbour – that is, themselves – they would not have believed the persuasion of the serpent, and thus would not have committed murder upon themselves, by falling from immortality, by contravening God's precept; from theft also they would have abstained, if they had not stealthily tasted of the fruit of the tree, nor had been anxious to skulk beneath a tree to escape the view of the Lord their God; nor would they have been made partners with the falsehood-as severing devil, by believing him that they would be ‘like God’; and thus they would not have offended God either, as their Father, who had fashioned them from clay of the earth, as out of the womb of a mother; if they had not coveted another's, they would not have tasted of the unlawful fruit.”

⁷³ On the Noahide laws, see Novak 1983, 1998.

⁷⁴ Cf. references in Schultz 1975, 51 n. 44: *Exod. Rab.* 30.9; *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 12.1; *Num. Rab.* 14.2; etc.

The idea that a certain law contained subsequent laws may also have been inherited from Philo. An interesting parallel is found in the *De decalogo* and *De specialibus legibus*. In *De decalogo* 19 and 154–78, Philo claims that each of the Ten Commandments are the *kephalaia* of more numerous and more specific laws. He explains that more special laws are “hidden,” or “implied” (165: *hupainittetai*, 168 and 171 *hupotektai*) under these more general laws, which have a “contracted form” (*tupon kephalaîôdê*) (168) and contain more specific law *en eidei* (175). This is reminiscent of Tertullian's claim that the precepts were hidden (*omnia praecepta condita*) in the law of paradise. Moreover, under some of these commands, Philo adds, are implied “all those necessary (*anagkaioi*) and most universally advantageous (*koinôpheleis*) laws” (170). Thus, just as in Tertullian, in Philo one finds the idea that a certain brief form of law (in Tertullian the command of Gen. 2.16–17; in Philo the Decalogue), contains, as it were, in embryo, more numerous other laws. Wolfson observed that a similar tradition existed in rabbinic literature but this is contested by Urbach.⁷⁵ At any rate, according to Urbach, the tradition reported by Philo does appear in rabbinic literature, but only in later midrashim.⁷⁶

Paul's use of the verb *anakephalaioô* in Roms 13.9 reflects a similar tradition: in this passage, he claims that the commandments about adultery, murder, theft, covetousness, and others are *summarized* in the commandment “to love your neighbour as thyself” (cf. Gals 5.14). In *Adversus Marcionem* 5.14.13, Tertullian paraphrases this verse: “Very properly, then, did he (*Paul*) sum up (*conclusit*) the entire teaching of the Creator in this precept of His: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’”

Tertullian was certainly influenced by Paul's idea in the *Adversus Judaeos* 2. But Philo's influence is not to be totally excluded. Indeed, like the Jewish philosopher, Tertullian asserts that an unwritten law preceded the Sinaitic law, which was respected by the patriarchs *naturaliter*.⁷⁷ Obviously, he does not follow him when he claims that the patriarchs are the unwritten law, being an embodiment of the written law. Moreover, Philo includes in the law of nature some commandments of the Decalogue: murder,⁷⁸ covetousness,⁷⁹ and Sabbath rest.⁸⁰ Although Tertullian excludes this last command from his octalogue, like Philo he closely associates his own Decalogue and the law of nature.

⁷⁵ The passages at stake are *Cant. Rab.* 5.14 cf. *y. Šeqal.* 6.1, 49 d (end). Cf. Wolfson 1947, 2.201 and Urbach 1975, 360–61.

⁷⁶ See the discussion in Urbach 1975, 362–64, who refers notably to Saadia Gaon.

⁷⁷ *Adv. Jud.* 2.7. Cf. on the unwritten law e.g. Philo, *Decal.* 1, *Abr.* 5, 16, 275. For a more detailed analysis see Najman 2003, 70–105.

⁷⁸ *Decalogue* 132. ⁷⁹ *Spec.* 4.212. ⁸⁰ *Decal.* 98.

The question whether Tertullian was under Philo's direct influence cannot be answered with certainty. He never refers explicitly to Philo, and only few parallels may be drawn between the two authors' thought. In some rare cases, a tradition reported by Tertullian may be brought in line with rabbinic sources when it cannot be ascribed to Philo or early Christian sources.⁸¹ In other rare cases, Tertullian may have drawn ideas from Philo but this cannot be proven.⁸² Possible parallels concern the distinction between *pneuma* and *pnoè* (cf. *aurula spiritus* and *imago spiritus* in Tertullian), the concepts of sleep and *ekstasis*, and the location of the rational part of the soul.⁸³

Whether Tertullian was influenced directly by Philo or not is of little importance. The real question is: may it be that in the *Adversus Iudaeos* Tertullian was reacting to contemporary Jewish traditions? Tertullian's argument about a pre-Sinaitic law was a dangerous argument (or even a bad one), as it could be – and was – used in order to show the eternity of the Mosaic law; moreover, the vegetal metaphor could be taken as meaning that the first law was developed – and therefore perfected – in the Mosaic law; such an interpretation could lead to the idea that the Mosaic law was superior to the natural law of the patriarchs. I would suggest that it is precisely these weaknesses in Tertullian's argument which point to a response to the Jewish tradition. In addition, the originality of Tertullian's treatment of the law in comparison to his Christian predecessors may also point to the fact that he had a specific Jewish tradition in mind. The fact that he uses ideas similar – though not identical – to Jewish ideas but to a completely different purpose may also suggest that he purposefully reworked such ideas for polemical purposes: according to his scheme, the law of paradise does not culminate in the complete set of Sinaitic laws; on the contrary, the Law of Moses is only another stage before the giving of the eternal law, that is the evangelical law. However, I disagree with Dunn's claim that "the implication was that the gentiles like the patriarchs were keeping the original, natural law rather than the derivative written law" and that the new law is the restoration of the first, natural law followed by the patriarchs.⁸⁴ In this specific passage at least, the natural law of the patriarchs is a reformed version of the law of paradise, just as the Mosaic law is also a reformed version of this law, given by God at a definite time,

⁸¹ See the discussion of *Prax.* 12 and especially *Marc.* 2.20 on the *spoliatio Aegyptiorum* in Aziza 1977, 168–72.

⁸² On Tertullian's possible use of Philo, see Aziza 1977, 192–93 and Runia 1993, 277–81.

⁸³ See the references and discussion in Runia 1993, 279–80.

⁸⁴ Dunn 2008, 113

for a definite purpose: "Whence we understand that God's law was anterior even to Moses, and was not first [given] in Horeb, nor in Sinai and in the desert, but was more ancient; [*existing*] *first in paradise, subsequently reformed for the patriarchs, and so again for the Jews, at definite periods*" (my italics).⁸⁵ Therefore, as unexpected as it may be, the Mosaic law is not undermined in comparison with the natural law. That which Tertullian emphasizes is that the Law of Moses is only one of the stages of the divine law – neither its beginning, nor its climax, since it is only temporary.

Thus Tertullian may have redeployed a Jewish tradition in order to subvert Jewish claims of exclusivity. Analyzing Tertullian's theory of the legal dispensation with/against the Jewish traditions related to the Noahide laws and the Decalogue enables us to better understand what is at stake in this passage.

CONCLUSION

By redeploying Jewish traditions on the origins of the Mosaic law in the context of the paradise and the law given to Adam and Eve, Tertullian provides an original treatment of the legal dispensation that finds no parallel in the early Christian tradition. He creatively reworks a Jewish idea in order to support his own Christian claims. If my suggestion is correct, we find in the *Adversus Iudaeos* another hint that Tertullian was aware of at least some Jewish traditions and that his Jews may not only be Jews of straw.

⁸⁵ *Adv. Jud.* 2.9.

*The language of paradise: Hebrew or
Syriac? Linguistic speculations and linguistic realities
in late antiquity*

Yonatan Moss

Language plays a central role in the creation and paradise accounts of Gen. 1–3. God creates the world through a string of speech-acts. The narrative of the paradise account is propelled forward by a series of conversations between God, Adam, Eve, and the serpent. Adam’s very first act is to give names to the animals (Gen. 2.19–20) and his first encounter with woman is verbal: he exclaims his satisfaction and names her “woman” (Gen. 2.23). Language is central to the paradise account, but the Bible does not make clear what particular language this was. Neither, for that matter, does the text specify what language was spoken before the Confusion of Tongues described in Gen. 11. Late antique commentators, both Christian and Jewish, consistently gave one of two answers to this question: according to some, the language spoken by Adam was Hebrew; according to others it was Aramaic, or Syriac.¹

Unlike some of the early modern speculations on this question which tended to be ridiculously chauvinist, as for example, the opinion of the sixteenth-century linguist Johannes Goropius that the language of paradise was the Brabantic form of Dutch spoken in his city of Antwerp,² the late antique opinions did not line up only according to religious divides. While the desire to assert cultural and ethnic superiority may be reasonably postulated as one kind of motivation for statements on the matter,³ the fact is that most Christian sources, including a minority opinion even among Syriac writers, assert Hebrew as the primordial language.⁴ On the

¹ *Sib. Or.* 3.24–26 and 2 *Enoch* 30.13 read the Greek letters of Adam’s name as initials of the four cardinal directions (in Greek). This may point to an assumption that the language of creation was Greek. But I have not been able to find any ancient source which explicitly states that the language of paradise was Greek.

² For Goropius see Charnock 1863, 196. For early modern nationalistic linguistics in general, see Eco 1995, 95–103.

³ Schwartz 1995; Rubin 1998.

⁴ This is the opinion commonly expressed by late antique Christian authors writing in Greek and in Latin: e.g. Pseudo-Clem., *Recog.* 1.30 (Hebrew was given by God to Adam and spoken by all until the generation before Nimrod); Origen, *Hom. in Num.* 11.4 (the language of Adam remained

rabbinic side, there is an opinion that Adam spoke Aramaic,⁵ as well as another opinion that prior to the Confusion of Tongues seventy different languages, and not just Hebrew, were spoken and understood by all.⁶

The excellent scholarly treatments of ancient, late antique, and medieval attitudes to the question of the original tongue analyze the various sources in terms of their respective ideological motivations.⁷ Language is connected to ethnic, cultural, and religious identities. The defense of the historical priority of this or that language is linked to the corporate identity to which the person making the defense belonged. While this approach does make sense, its power of explanation goes only so far. It ultimately does not explain why some rabbis support the priority of Aramaic, and why most Christians support the priority of Hebrew. It also does not sufficiently take into account the historical, contextual, and rhetorical aspects of the problem: why certain opinions appear when they do historically; why they appear where they do, in terms of their geographical location and their situation within the text; and why they appear how they do, in terms of their rhetorical presentation.

Naturally, we cannot know as much as we would like to about these questions in each and every case. But closer attention to the aspects that we can know about may more fully explain some of the late antique opinions concerning the language of paradise. An examination of the sources shows that the late antique opinions are anchored in particular linguistic arguments. In the pages that follow I will analyze four late antique stances on the issue. Two of them appear in rabbinic sources, and two in Christian sources. My analysis will pay special attention to the linguistic situations in which each opinion was produced and to the rhetorical and linguistic arguments made in its support.

The arguments put forward in these texts open a window onto contemporary linguistic thinking. Such issues as similarities and differences between and within languages, linguistic change, languages in contact, and variation in sociolinguistic function underlie the discussions about the original language of paradise. These arguments were not merely the result

only with the Hebrews); John Chrysostom, *Hom. in Gen.* 30 on Gen. 11.1 (Eber preserved the original tongue Hebrew, even after the Confusion of Tongues); Jerome, *In Sophoniam* 3.14 (Hebrew is the mother of all tongues); Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 16.11 (Eber preserved the original tongue). For a detailed survey see Borst 1957, especially 1.227–92. Jacob of Edessa, writing in Syriac in the early eighth century, also supports Hebrew priority. See Wright 1867 and Nau 1905. Jacob of Edessa's Letter 13 is dedicated to the question of the original tongue.

⁵ *b. Sanh.* 38b. See more on this source below.

⁶ *y. Meg.* 1.9 (71b) in the name of either R. Yohanan or R. Elazar (mid–late third century).

⁷ Borst 1957; Rubin 1998; and, indirectly, Schwartz 1995.

of hypothetical speculation, nor were they the result of systematic inquiry, in the manner of modern linguistic study. Rather they arose from the everyday linguistic situations in which they were produced. Multilingualism and dialectological variety were the familiar state of affairs in the eastern parts of the Roman Empire,⁸ where our evidence comes from.⁹ Even if it is not always possible for the modern scholar to establish actual competency levels in the different languages,¹⁰ the multilingual experience would have been a familiar one.¹¹ This was especially true for Greek, Aramaic/Syriac, and Hebrew among Jews and Christians in the late antique Near East. Late antique linguistic speculation is informed by familiarity with the fact that Hebrew and Greek were key languages in the history and present reality of one's culture, even if one did not necessarily speak or read either or both of these languages, and by the knowledge that Aramaic is a common form of communication and a culturally significant language in its own right. In other words, even in the absence of knowledge *of* foreign languages, the encounter with these languages and knowledge *about* them was sufficient cause for linguistic reflection.

A recurrent tendency which emerges from these late antique reflections is to view the question of the original language of biblical history through the lens of contemporary linguistic realities. The different attitudes to the primordial status of Hebrew in particular are related, I will argue, to Hebrew's changing sociolinguistic position over the course of late antiquity.

I would like to clarify in advance that I do not mean to imply that these expressions of late antique linguistic thinking are to be taken as harbingers of later developments in linguistic thought. The late antique examples are sporadic and isolated; they do not aspire to the systematic

⁸ In the case of the Babylonian rabbis, it was the Sassanid empire.

⁹ On ancient "bilingual culture" in general see Adams *et al.* 2002. For surveys of points of language contact across the Empire see Neumann and Untermann 1980. For an in-depth treatment of the bilingual usage of Latin and other languages see Adams 2003. For the multilingual situation of the Jews of Palestine in particular see Spolsky 1996 and the judicious article by Fraade 1992. For Syriac and Greek see Taylor 2002. For Greek and Arabic see R. Stroumsa 2008, esp. 185–213.

¹⁰ Recent scholarship on bilingualism, in reaction to earlier studies, frequently emphasizes this methodological issue. See, e.g., Adams 2003, 3–8; Taylor 2002, 298–300.

¹¹ Literary sources, which tend to be transmitted monolingually, can be deceptive in this regard. The epigraphic and documentary record throughout the eastern Empire portrays a much more diverse linguistic picture. For Egypt, see Sidarus 2008. For late antique Palestine see Fraade 1992, especially 277–82. In addition, now see Fraade's forthcoming "Language Mix and Multilingualism in Ancient Palestine: Literary and Inscriptional Evidence." The Dura Europos excavations have unearthed texts written in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Jewish Aramaic, Syriac, Palmyrene Aramaic, Saffaitic, Parthian, and Middle Persian. See Taylor 2002, 300.

“ADAM SPOKE ARAMAIC”: RABBIS READING
THE HEBREW BIBLE MULTILINGUALLY

The connection between Rav's assertion and his scriptural proof-text is not made explicit. But, as already the medieval Talmud commentators realized,²⁰ Ps. 139.17 was interpreted as words spoken by Adam, due to its

²⁰ See Rashi's comment on this passage.

proximity to verses 15–16, which speak of a human formed from earth.²¹ Based on the exegetical assumption that it is Adam who speaks in these verses, Rav probably interpreted verse 17 as a string of Aramaisms.²² The verb *yaqru* must have been interpreted in the Aramaic sense of “weighty,” as opposed to the Hebrew sense of “precious.” The word translated above as “your thoughts” (*rei'ekha*) only has this meaning if read as an Aramaism; in Hebrew it would be taken as “your friends.” The word translated above as “the best of them” (*rasheihem*) accords more with this root’s semantic field in Aramaic than in Hebrew.²³

There are no documented ancient parallels to Rav’s Aramaicizing reading of Ps. 139.17,²⁴ but modern critical interpreters actually tend to prefer this reading.²⁵

It is difficult to assess the initial historical context for this statement attributed to Rav. Some scholars have read his words as a response to the alternative claim that Hebrew was the original tongue. Rav has been interpreted as being motivated by loyalty to the language of his native Babylonia. The opinion, to which Rav is responding, according to this interpretation, has been variously sought out in the rabbinic sources, without much success.²⁶

Perhaps Rav’s statement should be interpreted in another light. This statement appears together with three other statements with the same chain of attribution: R. Judah in the name of Rav. Taken in the context of these other statements, it appears that associating between Adam and Aramaic may have actually had a negative connotation. For the first two statements speak of Adam’s sin and the diminishment he suffered as a result of it, and the fourth statement claims that Adam was a *min*, a sectarian.

²¹ “My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth. Your eyes beheld my unformed substance...”

²² And not, as some have read it, only as based on the first word *yaqru*. See Rubin 1998, 316.

²³ See Sokoloff 2002b, 510, s.v. ראש, ריש definition 6. See also Payne Smith 1903, 540, s.v. ראש.

²⁴ LXX and Vg offer Hebraicizing readings. Resh Laqish’s interpretation of the verse which immediately follows Rav’s is predicated on an understanding of *rei'ekha* as “your friends.”

²⁵ For a review of the ancient and modern translations, see: Briggs and Briggs 1906, 2.498. Dahood 1966–70, 3.296 offers strong arguments in favor of an Aramaicizing interpretation of the verse.

²⁶ Ginzberg 1900, 93 sees Rav’s statement as a patriotic defense of Aramaic in light of the statement of his teacher, R. Judah the Patriarch, which protests the usage of Aramaic (*leshon sursi*) in the Land of Israel (*b. B. Qam.* 82b–83a). Whether or not this claim is historically viable, in any case R. Judah the Patriarch says nothing about the original tongue. According to another view, Rav here is construed as in debate with Resh Laqish, according to whom Adam spoke Hebrew. But the text does not make this explicit. On the contrary, according to the Bavli’s presentation, supported by all the manuscripts, Resh Laqish’s interpretation is in agreement with Rav’s statement: for the transition between Rav and Resh Laqish is signaled by the words “and this is as Resh Laqish said...” (והיינו דאמר ריש לקיש). See Fraade 1992, 270 n. 41.

Also the other statements attributed to other rabbis which the redactor has chosen to present in this context portray Adam in uncomplimentary terms: Adam, according to these other statements, attempted to remove the mark of his circumcision and he denied God. Contrary to the pro-Babylonian interpretation suggested in earlier scholarship, the textual context of Rav's statement about Adam speaking Aramaic indicates that it was meant not so much as a compliment as it was a derogatory slight towards both Adam and Aramaic.²⁷

It may be speculated that Rav's negative interpretation of Adam was polemically motivated. Perhaps he was responding to some version of the Gnostic idea of the primordial *Urmensch* either within or outside of rabbinic culture.²⁸ It is also possible that his statements were directed at non-Gnostic groups in which the typological elevation of Adam, in the wake of Rom. 5 and 1 Cor. 15, was a common theme in the second and third centuries.²⁹

From the linguistic point of view, Rav's reliance on Ps. 139.17 for the idea that Adam spoke Aramaic is predicated on a reading practice, documented also elsewhere in rabbinic literature, by which certain words of the biblical text are interpreted not as Hebrew words but as words belonging to another language: most often Aramaic or Greek, but occasionally also Arabic, Coptic, Persian, and other languages.³⁰ Various explanations have been offered for this apparently strange phenomenon. It has been connected to Greek methods of dream interpretation;³¹ it has been read as a type of "creative philology";³² as a harbinger of post-structuralist grammato-centric hermeneutics;³³ as motivated by a particular linguistic theology that views all languages as reflections of Hebrew, the language of creation;³⁴ and as a form of folkloristic punning.³⁵

An alternative explanation, while not necessarily exclusive of some of the other explanations listed above, might be to view the phenomenon

²⁷ That this is the simple interpretation of these statements is proven by R. Hananel b. Hushiel's (eleventh century, North Africa) apologetic comment on this passage. He interprets these statements not as views held by the rabbis themselves, but as rabbinic citations of sectarian opinions; "but [God] forbid that the sages of the Talmud would say anything negative about Adam." Urbach 1975, 1.230 surprisingly seems to follow R. Hananel's interpretation. Urbach suggests that Rav here is representing the sectarian image of Adam.

²⁸ The classic study of the Gnostic *Urmensch* is Schenke 1962. For a similar interpretation of rabbinic statements as reactions against currents which elevated Adam see Anderson 2000.

²⁹ See Bundy 1997 and the literature cited there, to which add Daniélou 1964, 309–10.

³⁰ The fundamental study remains Brüll 1869. See 20–27 (Greek); 30–40 (Aramaic); 40–47 (Arabic); 47–48 (Coptic); 49–51 (Persian); 52–58 (other languages).

³¹ Lieberman 1950, 70–74. ³² Heinemann 1940. ³³ Handelsman 1982, 71–75; 165–71.

³⁴ Eilberg-Schwartz 1987, especially at 780–84. ³⁵ Hasan-Rokem 2007.

of multilingual biblical interpretation from the perspective of the everyday multilingual experience in which the rabbis lived. In a multilingual society language contact, borrowing, interference and “code-switching” are the norm. The thousands of Greek loanwords absorbed into rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic are a testament to the degree of contact between the languages.³⁶ The many Aramaisms in tannaitic Hebrew, and the Hebrew-Aramaic “creole” which characterizes so much of amoraic literature prove just how intertwined Hebrew and Aramaic were in rabbinic speech.³⁷ If the rabbis experienced their own Hebrew as a language interspersed with Greek and laden with Aramaic, it would make sense for them to approach the Bible’s Hebrew in a similar vein. Everyday experience taught them that other languages as well, which they heard in the market, such as Arabic, had words that were similar to Hebrew words, but with possibly different meanings. One did not need to be a modern scholar of comparative Semitic linguistics to realize that there was some kinship between Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic, and, to a lesser degree, Coptic as well.

The reason we might find the rabbinic multilingual method of interpretation strange is our knowledge of the role of history in linguistics. We judge as unfounded the interpretation of biblical Hebrew through the medium of Greek for texts which we know to have been composed prior to the Hellenistic period. But the rabbis did not think in these historical terms. Just as they “rabbinized the past”³⁸ when it came to the Torah’s law and narrative, so also did the rabbis “rabbinize” the Torah’s linguistic situation. The rabbis interpreted the language of the Bible like their own language, as mixed with Aramaisms and loanwords from Greek and other languages.

In short, when Rav interpreted Ps. 139.17 as an indication that Adam spoke Aramaic, he³⁹ was projecting onto the imagined speaker of this verse the same kind of linguistic interference he himself would have been familiar with from his daily experience as a Hebrew-Aramaic bilingual.⁴⁰

³⁶ Classic treatments are: Krauss 1898–99; Lieberman 1942; Sperber 1984.

³⁷ On the mutual influences of Aramaic and Hebrew among the rabbis, see Breuer 2006, especially 458–60, 482–84. See also Gluska 1999. On the bilingual nature of amoraic literature as a whole see Fraade 1992, 273–76.

³⁸ For the term “the rabbinization of the past,” see Gafni 2007, 304–09.

³⁹ Or, to adopt a more skeptical approach, I could attribute this hermeneutical-linguistic process not to Rav himself but to the tradition which credited Rav with this saying.

⁴⁰ By way of comparison, see Gregory of Nyssa’s comment on 1 Cor 15.47, *PG* 44, 204D: “For the earthly creation is called ‘Adam’ following the word’s etymology, according to those expert in the Hebrew language. For this reason the Apostle (=Paul), well trained in the Israelite language of his fathers, calls terrestrial man ‘earthly’ (*xoikos*), as though translating the word ‘Adam’ into the Greek language.”

TONGUE FALLING ON TONGUE: GENESIS RABBAH'S APPEAL
TO HEBREW'S UNTRANSLATABLE PUNS

One of the first rabbinic assertions that Hebrew was the language spoken in paradise, that can be dated with relative security,⁴¹ appears in *Genesis Rabbah* (edited around 425). R. Pinhas and R. Hilqiya report in the name of the Palestinian rabbi Simon b. Pazi, who flourished around the turn of the fourth century.

"She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man" (Gen. 2.23): From here you learn that the Torah was given in the Holy Tongue. R. Pinhas and R. Hilqiya⁴² said in the name of R. Simon: just as the Torah was given in the Holy Tongue, so was the world created in the Holy Tongue. Have you ever heard someone say: *gyne, gynia; itta, iteta; anthrope, anthropia; gavra, gvarita*? Rather, [it is only] *ish* and *isha*, since this tongue falls upon that tongue [i.e. the two words are related].⁴³

The argument here is made from paronomasia. The account of the naming of woman is founded on a play on words that works in Hebrew, but not in either of the other two languages best known to the rabbis of Palestine: Greek and Aramaic. *Ish* and *isha* sound similar; but the respective Greek and Aramaic words for "man" and "woman" are dissimilar.⁴⁴ Rabbinic awareness that biblical paronomasia is language-specific derives from the multilingual reality of everyday life. It is a form of "folk-linguistics."

R. Simon does not explicitly state that Hebrew was the language spoken in paradise, but his citation of Adam's words in Gen. 2.23 to prove that the world was created in Hebrew assumes that the language of creation is the same as the language of paradise.

It should be noted that R. Simon and the redactor of *Genesis Rabbah* derive different conclusions from the play on words of Gen. 2.23. The redactor uses the verse as evidence for Hebrew being the original language of the Torah, whereas the dictum cited in the name of R. Simon

⁴¹ Rubin 1998 refers also to evidence from the *Targum Yerushalmi* and Neofiti as well as from the *Tanhuma-Yelammedenu* literature. But the dating of all three of these sources is disputed.

⁴² *Gen. R.* 31.8 (Theodor-Albeck, 281), a parallel appearance of this dictum, reads Hizqiya, not Hilqiya.

⁴³ *Gen. R.* 18.4 (Theodor-Albeck, 164–65): חלקיה 'פינחס ור' חלקיה 'מכאן אתה למד שניתנה תורה בלשון הקודש, ר' פינחס ור' חלקיה 'שם ר' סימון שניתנה בלשון הקודש כך נברא העולם בלשון הקודש, שמעת מימך אומר גיני גיניה, איתא איתתא, אנתרופי אנתרופי, גברא גברתא, אלא איש ואשה, למה שהלשון נופל על הלשון הזה.

⁴⁴ Symmachus and Jerome attempted to preserve the play on words in their respective translations. The former rendered "woman" with the neologism *andris* (as if derived from *aner*, meaning "man") and the latter rendered it *virago*. See Jerome's discussion in his *Quaest. heb. in Gen.* on Gen. 2.23 (*PL* 23, 942A; Lagarde *et al.*, eds., CCSL 72, 5).

Some say that in the Hebrew tongue these two words [for “man” and “woman”] are more closely related to each other than in the Greek, Syriac and Aramaic;⁵⁰ and all other tongues. In the Hebrew it says: she shall be called *gvarā* because she was taken from *gavrā*, and these two words are better related than *ittā* and *gavrā*. The Hebrew says: “she shall be called *i(n)shā* since she was taken from the *ish*” – *ish* in Hebrew means “man” (*gavrā*), and *isha* means *woman* (*gvarā*). Hence in Hebrew these words are more closely related to each other than their equivalents in any other language. “From this we learn,” say the interpreters, “that it was in the Hebrew language that God spoke with Adam.”⁵¹

Bar Kepha either drew this account straight from Jewish informants⁵² or he received it through the mediation of an unknown Christian source. This is not the only instance where Bar Kepha reproduces an opinion otherwise known only from rabbinic sources.⁵³ Be the case as it may be, Bar Kepha himself was of the opinion that Adam spoke Syriac, not Hebrew. Bar Kepha’s stance owes its origins to a line of thought developed primarily by two fifth century bishops, Theodore of Mopsuestia and Theodoret of Cyrrhus.⁵⁴ These authors anchored their claims in favor of Syriac priority over Hebrew in historical and sociolinguistic arguments. As I proposed for the rabbinic opinions reviewed above, also in the case of Theodore and Theodoret I suggest that it was their empirical linguistic situations that inspired them to make the linguistic arguments that they did.

PURE SYRIAC AND CREOLIZED HEBREW: THEODORE OF MOPSUESTIA’S HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS

It will be recalled that the rhetoric of the passage from *Genesis Rabbah* cited above was polemical. Especially the redactor’s phrase “from here you learn” implies that Gen. 2.23 was recruited as proof for a disputed claim.

⁵⁰ Cf. Masius’ Latin which incorrectly reads here: “Armeniaca.” See the discussion of Theodore bar Koni further below, which demonstrates that Syriac authors in the eighth and ninth centuries distinguished between Syriac and Aramaic. The contemporary Aramaic spoken in Babylonia was considered a highly corrupted version of the original language spoken in that area. The contemporary Syriac of Emesa and Apamea was considered much closer to this original language.

⁵¹ It may be noted that the early eleventh-century Hebrew grammarian Judah ibn Janah made the same claim on the basis of his comparison with the Aramaic and Arabic words for man and woman. See Téné 1983, 242 n. 14. I thank Elitzur Bar Asher for this reference.

⁵² For part of his life Bar Kepha was bishop of the Miaphysite community in Mosul: see Reller 1994, 42–47. Jewish presence in Mosul is well documented for the ninth and tenth centuries. See Mann 1931, 1.477–79; Laniado 1981, 30–31.

⁵³ See Ginzberg 1900, 40 n. 7, 58 n. 4; Ginzberg 1909–38 5.97 n. 70.

⁵⁴ Theodore and Theodoret are not the only late antique writers to make this claim, but their testimonies are among the earliest that can be securely dated, especially Theodoret, since, as I will discuss below, the attribution to Theodore here relies on later sources. Syriac priority also appears in other late antique sources but their dating is questionable. One such source is the Syriac *Cave*

But who would have disputed that Hebrew was the language of revelation, of creation or of paradise? There is the possibility that the statement of Rav analyzed above represented a real current of thought within rabbinic culture, and it was against this current of thought that the midrash aims its polemic here. However, this does not seem likely, especially if the contextualization I proposed for Rav's statement is correct. The point of Rav's statement was not to elevate the status of Aramaic by associating it with Adam, but rather the point was, perhaps in reaction to groups which venerated Adam, to degrade Adam by associating him with Aramaic.

It seems more likely that the midrash's arrows were directed outwards, to a position devaluing Hebrew as the language of paradise promoted outside of rabbinic culture.

There is basically no evidence that Christians in late antiquity denied that the original language of the text of the Pentateuch was Hebrew.⁵⁵ There were claims, however, to the effect that Hebrew was not the language of creation; that it was a language "invented" only after the Israelites left Egypt. But these claims come up only in passing, and are subservient to other polemical ends.⁵⁶ The consensus down to the end of the fourth century appears to have been that if there was any primordial language at all,⁵⁷ it was Hebrew.

It is not until the fifth century that we encounter the first full-scale attacks on Hebrew priority. Theodore of Mopsuestia, probably writing sometime in the first quarter of the century, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, writing a generation later, in the 450s, argue that Syriac was the original

of Treasures ch. 24. See Ri 1987, 186–88 (text); 70–72 (trans.). Note the text's polemical tone: "the ancient writers have erred in that they said that Hebrew was the first language." The dating of the *Cave of Treasures* is insecure. Estimations range from the third to the sixth centuries. Leonhard 2001 reviews the debate and suggests a later, rather than earlier, date. Another source which is difficult to date and which presents Syriac as the original tongue is the Slavonic version of *3 Baruch* (also known as the *Greek Apocalypse of Baruch*). See James 1897, 97. Only the Slavonic, not the Greek, manuscripts contain the remark about Syriac being the language spoken from Adam to Babel.

⁵⁵ One possible exception is the Pseudo-Hippolytan Arabic catena which states that the Torah was translated from Syriac into Hebrew. The date of this work is unknown but it seems relatively late. See Rubin 1998, 325, and the literature cited there.

⁵⁶ This claim was made by Celsus (in Origen *Contr. Cels.* 3.6) who says, in the tradition of Manetho, that the people who left Egypt were not of Hebrew origin, but actually seditious Egyptian slaves. Only once they departed from Egypt did they invent the Hebrew tongue. Gregory of Nyssa (*Contr. Eunom.* 11; ed. Jaeger, 1.300) relies on Celsus' claim that Hebrew was an invented language in his polemic against Eunomius' extreme linguistic realism. For Gregory, Hebrew, as well as every other language and linguistic expression, is only a matter of human convention. For the philosophical context of this debate see Daniélou 1956.

⁵⁷ Gregory of Nyssa is of the opinion that this primordial language was not necessarily the same as any other known language.

tongue. Hebrew, they state, did not come on the scene until much later. Although the Pentateuch was *textualized* in Hebrew, so that it might be comprehensible to the Israelites, the original events to which it refers took place in Syriac. Theodore and Theodoret offer different linguistic arguments to buttress the case.

Due to his condemnation by the Byzantine Church only a small fraction of Theodore of Mopsuestia's work has survived in its original Greek. Much more survives in Syriac translation thanks to the place of honor Theodore holds in the (Assyrian) Church of the East,⁵⁸ where he is called the Interpreter, *par excellence*.

Two such sources, written in the eighth and ninth centuries, attribute to Theodore the opinion that Syriac was the original language in which God spoke with Adam and Eve in paradise. These sources are an anonymous biblical commentary known as the Diyarbakir manuscript, which is dated by its editor to the turn of the eighth century;⁵⁹ and Isho'dad of Merv's *Commentary on Genesis* written around 850 CE.⁶⁰ Although in some cases the Diyarbakir manuscript's attributions to Theodore can be corroborated by extant fifth-century translations of Theodore into Syriac, in this case no outside confirmation has yet been found.⁶¹

There is also a third, eighth-century source which argues for Syriac priority in terms very similar to the two other sources. But it does not attribute this opinion to Theodore of Mopsuestia. The source in question is Theodore bar Koni's *Book of Scholia*, written in the middle of the eighth century.⁶² Bar Koni's evidence must be taken into consideration in any attempt to assess the reliability of the attribution of the idea of Syriac priority to Theodore of Mopsuestia.

My comparative analysis of the three reports has led me to conclude that all three sources must have drawn on one common source,⁶³ and that the Diyarbakir version must be closest to the original. Diyarbakir presents the simplest and tightest version of the argument. It makes more sense to view the additional material contained in the other two sources

⁵⁸ Known as the "Nestorian" Church by its opponents.

⁵⁹ van Rompay 1986, 2. lii–liii.

⁶⁰ Eynde 1950–55, 2. i–iii.

⁶¹ van Rompay 1986, 2. xix–xxii (on attributions to Theodore in general); 88 n. 9 (on our case). It should be noted that there is another source which also attributes a very similar comment to Theodore. I am referring to the anonymous tenth century commentary preserved in Mingana MS 553, and published by Levene 1951. But, as van Rompay has shown, this commentary is entirely dependent on the Diyarbakir commentary. See van Rompay 1986, 2.xl–xliv.

⁶² Hespel and Draguet 1981–82.

⁶³ Since any combination of two of the three of sources displays at least one element not contained in the third source.

Supposed evidence recruited in earlier scholarship to prove that Theodore thought that Hebrew was the language of paradise turns out, upon inspection, not to be relevant.⁶⁷

Theodore's views on the original language of the Old Testament as well as evidence concerning his knowledge of Hebrew and Syriac languages and his usage of the Hebrew and Syriac textual traditions of the Bible⁶⁸ might, a priori, appear relevant to determining his opinion concerning the language of paradise. But when we take into consideration the example of Theodore's disciple, Theodoret of Cyrhus,⁶⁹ to be discussed below, it becomes clear that these two issues do not need to be connected. The example of Theodoret shows that one can support the idea of Syriac as the original language but at the same time defend Hebrew as the language of revelation. And, if we are to accept the emerging scholarly consensus on Theodoret's knowledge of Syriac, Theodore, like Theodoret after him, could support Syriac priority without necessarily having an in-depth knowledge of the language, and without necessarily relying on a Syriac version of the Old Testament as much as on the Greek ones.

On the other hand, the additional information contained in Bar Koni and Isho'dad's reports, but absent from the Diyarbakir version, seems less likely to have stemmed from Theodore's pen. Bar Koni and Isho'dad affirm that Syriac was the original language, with Isho'dad, in the manner of Diyarbakir, calling it "pure and polished," but when it comes to describing Hebrew as a mixed tongue subject to foreign influences, Bar Koni and Isho'dad turn this into a general linguistic principle, explaining that even Syriac has changed drastically due to foreign influences. To quote Bar Koni's version:⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Borst 1957, 251 deduces from Theodore's *Fragm. in Gen.* on Gen. 2.19 (PG 66, 637D) that Theodore was of the opinion that Adam named the animals in Hebrew. A closer reading of the text reveals that Theodore is actually not referring to the language of Adam but to the language of the text. Theodore attempts to resolve the exegetical problem posed by the LXX reading of Gen. 2.19: "And God formed yet farther (*eti*) out of the earth all the wild beasts of the field..." Why is the creation of the beasts described as an additional action, if God had already created the beasts in Gen. 1.24? Theodore's solution is to characterize the presence of the word "eti" as the LXX rendering of a Hebrew usage (τὸ δὲ "ἐτι" ἔκ τινος ιδιώματος τῆς Ἑβραϊδος προστίθησι γλώσσης). Ironically the Hebrew text, at least the MT, in this case actually does not have a term corresponding to the Greek *eti*. On Theodore's general hermeneutical technique of appeal to Hebrew usage see Zaharopoulos 1989, 119–20.

⁶⁸ See on these matters Devreesse 1948, 56–62; 83.

⁶⁹ In a letter to Irenaeus bishop of Tyre, Theodoret refers to Theodore as his teacher; he also refers to an apology that he wrote on Theodore's behalf. See Azéma 1955, 56–62. For fragments of the apology see Abramowski 1957.

⁷⁰ Hespel and Draguet 1981–82, 112–13.

Just as we find with Syriac, which with the changing of times, and the duration of generations, became agitated (ܐܘܬܝܬܐ) and corrupted (ܐܬܬܝܬܐ) by foreign usages (ܐܬܬܝܬܐ ܐܬܬܝܬܐ) and little by little it departed from where it had resided and it settled down in other places.

Thus if one compares the tongue of the Babylonians with genuine (ܐܬܬܝܬܐ) Syriac, it has not one percent (ܐܬܬܝܬܐ ܐܬܬܝܬܐ) of Syriac in it.⁷¹ And although⁷² it remained in Babylon, its genuineness (ܐܬܬܝܬܐ) is found in Emesa, in Apamea and in their environs.

And it happens that also the rest of the languages become corrupted in this manner (ܐܬܬܝܬܐ ܐܬܬܝܬܐ), especially from the proximity with other, neighboring languages.

The knowledge of the history and geographical distribution of Syriac displayed in these comments makes it more likely that they stem from a later, native, specifically Syriac, context than from Theodore himself.

Diyarbakir's representation of Theodore's opinion does not soften the contrast between Hebrew and Syriac in the way that Bar Koni and Isho'dad's versions do. For Diyarbakir, it is only Hebrew which is a *langue mixte*, while Syriac was, and remains, "pure and polished." If indeed Diyarbakir's representation of Theodore's opinion is to be accepted as authentic, it is tempting to speculate that the difference between Theodore's original view of Syriac and Bar Koni and Isho'dad's additions to it reflects a difference in the actual linguistic standing of Syriac between the fifth century and the eighth-ninth centuries. Arabic in the Abbasid period was more of a linguistic threat to Syriac than Greek was to it in the fifth century, at the heyday of independent Syriac literary creativity. In their accounts of the corruption of Syriac through foreign contact, Bar Koni and Isho'dad might well be describing the position of Syriac under Arabic hegemony in their own day.

As for Theodore's view of Hebrew as a creolized language, this may also have to do with its contemporary linguistic situation. According to current scholarly consensus, Hebrew gradually died out as a spoken language between the third and fifth centuries.⁷³ Or, at any rate, it became intertwined with Aramaic. Judging from the language of the redactorial level of the Palestinian Talmud and of the Palestinian midrashim, such as *Genesis Rabbah*, *Leviticus Rabbah*, and *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, all redacted

⁷¹ Cf. Isho'dad: "But as a matter of fact the Syriac tongue became especially confused in Babylon, on account of the kings who have captured each other; for the stranger's and immigrant's language is not at all polished (ܐܬܬܝܬܐ)." *ibid.*

⁷² The concessive reading of ܐܬܬܝܬܐ makes more sense than Hespel and Draguet's temporal reading, which induced them to add a negative: "et alors qu'il [n']est [pas] resté en Babylonie..." (p. 127).

⁷³ See Kutscher 1982, 117–18. Schwartz 1995 calls this consensus into question.

around the later part of this period, the spoken Hebrew of the rabbis had, by this time, undergone a thoroughgoing process of Aramaicization.⁷⁴ Thus, Theodore of Mopsuestia's understanding of Hebrew's historical linguistic situation in the Bible might have been informed by Hebrew's contemporary linguistic character.

What I propose for Theodore, by way of speculation, is explicitly stated by Theodoret of Cyrrhus. Theodoret extrapolates from contemporary Syriac meanings, and from the usage of Hebrew among the Jews observable in his own day to the biblical origins of the two languages. But unlike Theodore, Theodoret viewed the relationship in what today would be called sociolinguistic terms, as opposed to Theodore's comparative and historical linguistic approach.

HEBREW AS HIEROGLYPHICS: THEODORET OF CYRRHUS' SOCIOLINGUISTICS

Continuing the line of Theodore, Theodoret also viewed Syriac as the most ancient language. He sought to prove his case by appealing to contemporary Syriac etymologies for the names of biblical characters.⁷⁵ Thus, for example, Adam's name is of Syriac origin, "for it is customary among Syriac speakers to call red earth 'adamtha.'" What then, asks Theodoret, was the origin of Hebrew? He proposes (οἶμαι) that Hebrew was always a sacred language (ἱερὰ φωνή). Like the hieroglyphics once used in pagan temples, Hebrew was an artificial language given by God through the agency of Moses. It was always a language that needed to be learned; it was never acquired naturally. Unlike the members of all other nations – Italians, Greeks, Persians, Egyptians – who naturally speak the language of their land, Jews do not start out speaking Hebrew, but the language of the people among whom they are born. Only later, once they have grown to be lads (μειράκια), do the Jews

⁷⁴ See the insightful comments on this in Fraade 1992, 274–75: "Having examined all the rabbinic stories and sayings which...are said to prove that Hebrew had already died among all except the sages, and among them it had weakened, I find that each and every one can just as easily be interpreted to suggest that Hebrew and Aramaic continued to coexist, even as they were in competition with one another, and therefore significantly penetrated each other...it is important to remind ourselves that rabbinic literature is itself bilingual: it employs both Hebrew and Aramaic, not just in different texts but in the same texts, albeit to different extents. I speak here not so much of Hebrew influences on rabbinic Aramaic or of Aramaic influences on rabbinic Hebrew, of which there are many, but of the way in which some rabbinic texts alternate between Hebrew and Aramaic."

⁷⁵ As indicated above, the etymological argument was more commonly made by the supporters of Hebrew priority.

acquire knowledge of the Hebrew letters, and thus become able to study Scripture in Hebrew.⁷⁶

Theodoret provides an external confirmation of the disappearance, by the mid fifth century, of Hebrew as a spoken language, even in communities – presumably those associated with the rabbinic movement – who read the Bible not in Greek, but in Hebrew. He applies to the biblical period his sociolinguistic observation about the relative roles of Hebrew and the “vernacular” among contemporary Jews.

If Theodoret himself had any knowledge of Hebrew, it was probably minimal. He occasionally refers to Hebrew usages, often in conjunction with the Syriac,⁷⁷ in which he no doubt had a more solid footing. It has been suggested that Theodoret “knew Hebrew through... [Syriac], which is rather like knowing German through Afrikaans.”⁷⁸ But the extent of Theodoret’s knowledge of Syriac is itself currently under debate.

Earlier scholarship had concluded that Syriac was Theodoret’s mother tongue.⁷⁹ A reassessment of the evidence has led more recent scholars to ascribe to Theodoret no more than a “working knowledge” of the language.⁸⁰

In any case, Theodoret displays awareness of the dialectological diversity of contemporary Syriac. He compares the contemporary Osroëniens, Syrians, people of the Euphrates, Palestinians, and Phoenicians who speak different dialects (διαλέξεις) of the same Syriac language (φωνή) to the twelve different tribes of Israel which must have had different peculiarities of speech (ιδιώματα).⁸¹

These two passages from Theodoret’s *Questions on the Octateuch*, in which he characterizes Hebrew as a language of study and in which he speaks of dialectological diversity, display, more explicitly than any of the other sources I have presented so far, how late antique understandings of the relationship between Hebrew and Syriac were informed by the contemporary situation of these languages.⁸²

⁷⁶ Theodoret, *Quaest. in Gen.* 60–61. A newly edited Greek text and English translation can be found in: Petruccione and Hill 2007, 1.122–125.

⁷⁷ See the balanced discussion in Guinot 1995, 190–95.

⁷⁸ Ashby 1972, 15.

⁷⁹ For a review of the evidence and a clear statement of this position, see Guinot 1995, 195–97.

⁸⁰ Lehmann 2008, 187–216, with references to other scholars who have minimized Theodoret’s knowledge of Syriac.

⁸¹ Theodoret, *Quaest. in Iud.* 19, on Judges 12.6. Petruccione and Hill 2007, 2.342–43.

⁸² A contemporary example of this may be found in the footnote in the recent edition of Theodoret’s *Quaest. in Gen.* appended to Theodoret’s description of the children of the Hebrews who study Hebrew since they do not acquire it at home. Petruccione and Hill 2007, 1.125 n. 1a: “Theodoret seems to be referring to Jews of his acquaintance who had learned Hebrew in preparation for a Bar Mitzvah.” This is a projection of a contemporary, American-Jewish practice, developed only in the modern period, onto late antiquity. For a history of the Bar Mitzvah ceremony and the practices associated with it, see Marcus 2004, 82–123.

The modern study of historical linguistics has been dedicated to breaking free of the anachronistic grip under which these late antique authors and their medieval successors worked. Nevertheless, as contemporary theoreticians of historical linguistics realize, modern historical linguists must always rely on their own contemporary interpretations in order to understand the fragmentary linguistic data of the past. The present always informs our understanding of the past.⁸³

A further illustration of this simple observation can be found in the writings of the ninth century Spanish author ‘Abdalmalik Ibn Habīb as-Sulamī. According to him, the language of paradise was Arabic, and it was this language that Adam spoke as he left paradise. But with the passage of time, in the generations after Adam, the Arabic language became corrupted (*khariba*) and it transformed into Syriac. This explains why, according to Ibn Habīb, Syriac is so similar (*yushākilu*) to Arabic: Syriac is a perversion (*muharrifu*) of Arabic. Ibn Habīb cites the example of the Arabic and Syriac words for “donkey”: in Arabic it is called *himār*, while in Syriac it is called *hmora* (= Syriac ܚܡܪܐ).⁸⁴

The connection between Ibn Hābīb’s claims about the relationship between Syriac and Arabic and the claims of the contemporary Syriac sources about the relationship between Hebrew and Syriac is apparent. Late antique and early medieval speakers of Semitic languages could not help but notice that their languages were both similar and different one from another. The popular way to explain this strange admixture of the familiar and the foreign was the postulation of one ideal language from which the other languages were fallen corruptions. What better landscape to plot this explanation against than paradise and the fall from it?

⁸³ See Lass 1997.

⁸⁴ Abū Marwān ‘Abdalmalik Ibn Habīb as-Sulamī, *Kitāb fihi bad’ halq ad-dunyā*, MS Bodleian Marsh 288, 19.3, 9, 12–21. Cited in Goldziher 1994, 44, 104. The attribution of this work to Ibn Habīb has been called into question. See Huart 1903, 188.

The tree of life and the turning sword: Jewish biblical interpretation, symbols, and theological patterns and their Christian counterparts

Menahem Kister

In Gen. 3.22–24 we read:

And the Lord God said: “Behold, the man (הָאָדָם) has become¹ like one of us, knowing good and evil (לִדְעַת טוֹב וָרָע);² and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”... He drove out the man (הָאָדָם); and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming turning sword, to guard [lit.: keep] the path of the tree of life.

The plain sense of the text is that God barred Adam from the Garden of Eden in order to prevent him (and presumably his posterity as well) from approaching the tree of life.³ Will humankind be forever denied access

¹ This is the plain meaning of the text. For other interpretations of the word הָיָה see below, n. 27.

² Or: “to distinguish between good and evil.” The verb יָדַע has this meaning, among others. The phrase was thus interpreted in the Palestinian Targum to Gen. 3.22: וְיִדְעִין לְמַפְרָשָׁא בֵּין טַב לְבִישׁ; cf. also the rendering of *Targum Onkelos* to Gen. 2.9: טַב לְבִישׁ בֵּין טַב לְבִישׁ (similarly Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.42: טֹסֶס טֹסֶס וְאֵסֶס טֹסֶס). This interpretation of the biblical verse was known at Qumran; see 4QInstruction: [ט]וֹב ל[רַע] and וְאֵסֶס טֹסֶס וְאֵסֶס טֹסֶס (4Q417 1 I 8, 17–18); probably also [ט]וֹב לְרַע בֵּין טַב לְרַע (4Q300 3 2). For this meaning of the root יָדַע see also Qimron 1995, 307–08.

³ According to the biblical passage, Adam was expelled from Eden because eating the fruit of the tree of life changed his position in a way that endangered the deity; the same syntactical pattern, however, reoccurs in the context of human hybris and its threat to the deity in Gen. 11.6. Adam is accused in these verses in *hybris* (similarly Ezek. 28.17), rather than being described as the prototype of sinners, as he is often portrayed in Judaism since Second Temple Judaism and in Christianity. According to the latter interpretation, God’s prohibition was conceived of as a commandment, not different than God’s commandments at Sinai; see Lichtenberger 2004, 205–41. This “nomistic” interpretation became part of the Jewish heritage of Christianity. Both key-terms, “law” and “commandment,” were made available to Christian theology since Paul and John as non-halakic terms (i.e. as meaning Christ’s law and commandments respectively), which is inconceivable in Jewish texts, and thus Jewish “nomistic” concepts could be easily adapted to a new, Christian context. “Nomistic” statements in Christian writings might be traced back sometimes, directly or indirectly, to Jewish tradition; for instance, according to Ephrem the Syrian, in his *Commentary to Genesis*, Adam’s tasks “to work and guard” (Gen. 2.15) are interpreted (2.7 [p. 29]) “to guard the Law” and “to till the commandments,” as they are interpreted in Jewish sources (e.g. *Sipre Deut.* 41 [ed. Finkelstein, 87]; cf. also Kugel 1998 120–21) and similarly in Theophilus of Antioch’s *Ad Autolyicum* 2.24 (“The expression ‘to work’ implies no other task than keeping the commandments of God”; Grant 1970, 67). According to Ephrem’s *Commentary*, the commandment set down for Adam was מְצוּה קְלִיָּה, “a small commandment” (2.8 [p. 30]); its precise equivalent, מְצוּה קְלִיָּה,

to the Garden of Eden and the tree of life? This question, which is not asked in Genesis at all,⁴ is very much on the mind of Jews and Christians, for whom the biblical “Garden of Eden” has become the eschatological “Paradise.”⁵

“Tree of life” is mentioned four times in Proverbs (3.18, 11.30, 13.12, 15.4); one of the occurrences (3.18) is in the sentence “She [i.e. wisdom] is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her.” In the other occurrences in the Book of Proverbs, it should be noted, the “tree of life” does not refer to wisdom; in Prov. 13.12, for instance, the “tree of life” is “a fulfilled desire.” It seems likely to me that “in Proverbs, the tree of life is devoid of mythological significance and serves only as a figure for vitality and healing,”⁶ and that these passages do not refer to the tree of life of Genesis.

The “tree of life” appears also in an interpretative addition to a verse in Isaiah. While MT reads “For like the days of trees [lit.: the tree] shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall outlive [lit.: wear out] the work of their hands” (Isa. 65.22), “the tree” is understood as “tree of life” in the Septuagint and the Aramaic targum, as well as in a midrash (in which this “tree of life” is identified with the Torah, on the basis of Prov. 3.18).⁷ It seems that the “tree of life” according to this ancient interpretation of the verse is an eternal tree (not necessarily a life-giving tree, as in the story of Eden).

A somewhat similar case is the interpretation of the unspecified “tree” in the verse “He (= the pious) is like a tree planted by (a stream of) water” (Ps. 1.3, Jer. 17.8). The “tree” in these verses was interpreted in rabbinic literature, and probably also in the Qumranic *Hodayot*, as referring to

is used in Jewish sources in the same context (e.g. *Gen.Rab.* 21.3 [199]; *Tanhuma Buber Shemini* 13). Ephrem states: “Neither mortal did He make him nor immortal did He fashion him, so that Adam, by either keeping or transgressing the commandment, might acquire from one of the trees what he wished (i.e. ‘life’ by the tree of life, and knowledge of evil by the tree of knowledge of good and evil, see below, 2.34)” (*Sancti Ephraem Syri in Genesim et in Exodum* 2.17 [ed. Tonneau 1955, 1.34]; Mathews and Amar 1994, 109). A close parallel to this text occurs in the midrash, as well as in *Ad Autolycum*, 2.27 [Grant 1970, 70–77]; see also Kister 2007, esp. 417–18. Did Ephrem draw directly on Jewish traditions, or did he draw on a Christian source whose ultimate origin had been Jewish? The same problem applies to many Christian authors.

⁴ See also Barr 1992. ⁵ Kugel 1998, 103–05.

⁶ Fox 2000, 1.158–59. Contrast: Hurowitz 2004. Hurowitz argues that Provs 3.18 is “wisdom literature’s response” to the paradise story of Genesis. He admits, however, that “in the other three cases [where the tree of life is mentioned in the Book of Proverbs – M.K.] the ‘tree of life’ is merely a metaphor” (50), rather than an allusion to the Genesis story.

⁷ ‘Rabbi Shim’on ben Yoḥai says: “Scripture says, ‘For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people’ (Isa. 65.22) – ‘tree’ means Torah, as it is said, ‘She (wisdom) is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her’ (Provs 3.18). Is this not a matter of concluding *a minori ad majus*: if the Torah, which was created only for the glory of Israel, shall endure for all eternity, how much more so shall the righteous, for whose sake the whole world was created” (*Sipre Deut.*, 47, ed. Finkelstein, 100).

the tree of life.⁸ This interpretation may have its origins in a much earlier understanding of the verses in Psalms and Jeremiah. In the Jeremiah passage the “tree planted by water” is contrasted with “*ar’ar* in the desert” (Jer. 17.6); a plant named ‘*r’r* is called ‘*s mt*, “the tree of death” in a Ugaritic text,⁹ a finding which has raised the suggestion that “the tree planted by the water, as opposed to the ‘*ar’ar*, the tree of death, is none other than the tree of life,” although in Jeremiah this tree is “only the symbol of life,” rather than a life-giving tree.¹⁰ In light of the Ugaritic text, it seems possible that Ps. 1.3 and Jer. 17.8 were understood as referring to an eternally vital “tree of life.” This “tree of life” could be easily identified in a much later period as *the* tree of life of Genesis, a well-documented identification since the Second Temple period. Be it as it may, the verses in Genesis 2–3, Proverbs 3, Isaiah 65, Jeremiah 17, and Psalms 1 influenced each other’s interpretation in the post-biblical period.¹¹

In a passage belonging to one of the earliest strata of *1 Enoch* it is stated that in the *Eschaton* the fruit of the tree of life shall be given to the chosen, and they shall live long on earth (*1 Enoch* 25.4–7);¹² in other words, mortals have been denied the tree of life since Adam’s expulsion until the End

⁸ “The tree of life is five hundred years’ distance” (y. *Berakhot* 1.1 [2c]; R. Yehuda comments on this tradition); R. Meir says: “The name [of Euphrates] is *Yuval* (stream), as it is said: ‘...sends out its roots by the Stream’ (Ps. 1.3)” (b. *Bekhorot* 55b); Rabbi Shim’on b. Yoḥai taught: “A river flowed out of Eden,” whose name was *Yuval* (stream) and from there it drank. How do we know that? (it is written) “that sends out its roots by the Stream (*yuval*)” (Jer. 17.8) (*Lev. Rab.* 22.10 [ed. Margulies, 525–26]). Compare *Hodayot*: “they do not send their roots to the Stream” (1QH^a 16.11 [Suknik 8.10]; see H. Stegemann and E. Schuller 2009, 216), in contrast to “trees of life.” This line of interpretation is followed in the writings of the Church Fathers, who identify the “tree of life” in Psalms with the tree of life in Eden, which symbolizes Christ; see, for instance, Jerome, *Psalms: Homily 1*: “This tree of life [the tree in Ps. 1.3] was planted in the Garden of Eden... likewise we read in Solomon... when Solomon says, ‘She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her,’ he is speaking of wisdom. Now, if wisdom is the tree of life, Wisdom itself, indeed, is Christ.” (Morin 1958, 6; Ewald 1964, 1.7); the Christian exegesis adapts here the Jewish interpretation to Christology. See also Edwards 2007, 89 n. 300.

⁹ Dietrich *et al.* 1995, 1.100 ll. 64–65 (114); Wyatt 2002, 385.

¹⁰ Loewenstamm 1980, 224. According to Loewenstamm, “the tree of life was originally a tree which was eternally vital. From this the conception developed that such a tree could impart to others from its strength of life” (the article was first published in Hebrew, *Leshonenu* 29 [1965] 7; I slightly altered the English translation in comparison with the Hebrew original).

¹¹ The “tree” of Exodus 15.25 was also interpreted as the tree of life; see Philo, *Migration of Abraham* 36–37; *Biblical Antiquities* 11.15 (Jacobson 1996, 18, 110, 478; *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma’el Va-Yassa’* 1 (ed. Horowitz-Rabin, 155–56). Elsewhere I will deal with various ancient interpretations of Ex. 15.22–27.

¹² Similarly in *4 Ezra*: “It is for you that Paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the world to come is prepared” (8.52; see Stone 1990, 277, 286). In the *Testament of Levi* a similar idea is expressed in connection with the coming of the Messiah: “and he [=the Messiah] shall open the gates of Paradise, and he shall remove the sword that has threatened since Adam, and he will grant to the saints to eat of the tree of life” (*T. Levi* 18.10). Differentiating between Jewish and

of Days, when the chosen will regain it. Other, non-eschatological interpretations existed as well. The approach in the *Hodayot* seems to be that the entrance to the Garden of Eden remained open to the just, and that the cherubim and the turning flame (both angels, apparently) served to protect the garden and the righteous inside it from intruders: “I give you thanks, O Lord, because you have set me . . . water of the garden . . . trees of life (עצי חיים) . . . But you, [O God], protect its fruit with the mystery of mighty ones and of spirits of holiness¹³ and of a flame of turning fire (להט אש מטהפכת), so that no [stranger? will approach] the spring of life, nor drink the water of holiness with the everlasting trees” (1QH^a 16.5–7, 12–13 [= Sukenik edition 8.4–6, 11–12]).

Associating the “tree of life,” wisdom, in Provs 3.18 with *the* “tree of life” in Genesis (an association that occurred, in my view, only in the post-biblical period) implies that the tree of life of Genesis is accessible to those who acquired wisdom, i.e. Torah (the equation wisdom = Torah was made in the Second Temple period, and is prevalent in rabbinic literature).¹⁴ Such an interpretation is consistent with the contrasting symmetry between Adam’s transgression of a divinely given *commandment* and the acceptance of the Torah commandments.¹⁵ The Torah reversed the affects of Adam’s sin (especially death). Since observance of the commandments of the Torah is the only proper religious course, those who do so – namely the People of Israel – manifest the restoration of the correct relationship between God and human beings lost after Adam’s expulsion from Eden.¹⁶ For interpreters of the Bible in ancient Judaism, the twofold use of the phrase “tree of life” in Genesis 2–3 and Proverbs 3 could serve as an illustration of the broader theological format: observance of the commandments as a means for regaining possession of the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.¹⁷

Reading Gen. 3.24 in light of Prov. 3 had the potential of drastically changing the interpretation of the former: if the “tree of life” is the Torah,

Christian layers in this chapter of the *Testament of Levi* is particularly difficult, but this passage is nothing but a messianic variation of the eschatological motif of 1 *Enoch* and 4 *Ezra* (contrast Brock 1990b, esp. 145).

¹³ Both “mighty ones” and “spirits of holiness and a flame of turning fire” mean angels, the former according to Ps. 103.20, the latter according to Ps. 104.4 (compare *Gen. Rab.* 21.9 [203] on Gen. 3.24; see Kugel 1998, 74–76).

¹⁴ See also Kugel 1998, 125–26.

¹⁵ According to Christian interpretations the “tree of life” is identified with Christ (e.g. Origen, *Homilies on Joshua*, 8.6 [ed. Baehrens and Koetschau 1921, 342]). In this case the Jewish and the Christian traditions are two manifestations of the same theological pattern. For a similar phenomenon, see below, p. 152.

¹⁶ Kister 2007. ¹⁷ See above, n. 7.

does it make sense that God barred it from Adam's descendents? One solution was that the words "to guard (lit: *keep*) the path of the tree of life" should be interpreted as referring to *keeping* the commandments of the Torah, which is the path of life, the path for humans to return to the tree of life.

Thus we read in a tannaitic midrash:

Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i says: A book and a sword tied together descended from heaven. God said to them, "if you observe the Torah written in this one [= in the book], you will be saved from the other; if not, you will be smitten by it." Where is it set forth? In the verse "So He drove out the man (Adam) and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming turning sword, to keep the path of the tree of life."¹⁸

The words "to keep the path of the tree of life" have been interpreted as referring to observance of the commandments of the Law. The frequent occurrences in the Bible of the phrase "keep the path" (שמר + דרך) in reference to observance of the commandments no doubt encouraged this interpretation.¹⁹ The midrash contrasts "keeping the path of the tree of life," i.e. observance of the Law,²⁰ with the "turning sword," which is the sword that will smite the People of Israel *in this world* if they do not observe the Law; it will thus spur them to observe the Law, "to keep the path of the tree of life."

This reading of "keeping the path of the tree of life" is the key for the interpretation of Gen. 3.24 in the *Biblical Antiquities*:

And He said [to Moses]: "This is the place concerning which I taught the first-fashioned one, saying: 'If you do not transgress what I have commanded you, all things will be subject to you.' But that one *transgressed my ways*... then death was ordained for the generations of men. The Lord proceeded to show him (= Moses) the *ways of paradise* and said to him, 'these are the ways that men have lost by not walking in them, because they have sinned against me.' And the Lord commanded him...: 'If they will *walk in my ways*, I will not abandon them... because I am faithful *in my ways*.'"²¹

The "ways of Paradise" are juxtaposed to "the ways of God," i.e. keeping God's commandments. The two "ways" are apparently interrelated. They are also related to eternal life, lost by Adam because of his sin (13.9). It is clear from this passage that the commandments given to Israel are a

¹⁸ *Sipre Deut.*, 40 (ed. Finkelstein, 84); see also *Lev. Rab.* 35.4 (ed. Margulies, 823). Compare Hurowitz 2004, 60.

¹⁹ Note especially verses such as "Happy are those who keep my paths... for he who finds me finds life" (Prov 8.32–35).

²⁰ See also *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* ch. 12 and the commentators on it.

²¹ *Biblical Antiquities* 13.8–10; see Jacobson 1996, 21, 114, 521–25.

second opportunity for humankind, after Adam's transgression of the first commandment.

Other biblical passages might be relevant for the emergence of this interpretation of the words "to keep the path of the tree of life":

(1) The well-known verses "See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil . . . therefore choose life" (Deut. 30.15, 19) were crucially important in shaping the theory of the two *paths*, the path of life and the path of death, in Jewish and early Christian sources, as demonstrated by Brock and Flusser²² (also under the influence of the verse "Behold, I set before you the path of life and the path of death"; Jer. 21.8).²³ Thus the Palestinian targum of the verses in Deuteronomy reads: "See, I have put before you today the *path of life*, which is the *good path*, and the *path of death*, which is the *evil path*";²⁴ "you should choose the path of life."²⁵

(2) Expressions similar to "knowing good and evil"²⁶ (Gen. 3.22; see Gen. 2.9, 17) occur in two other verses. One of them says: "your children, who this day have no knowledge (or: distinction) of good and evil" (Deut. 1.39). Another verse says in the same context (referring to early infancy): "He [= the child] shall eat curds and honey until he knows how to *refuse the evil and choose the good*, for before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. . ." (Isa. 7.15–16). "Knowing good and evil," then, is knowing to *choose* the good.

Readers of the Bible in antiquity could infer from these verses that the "knowledge of good and evil," i.e. distinguishing good from evil, means choosing "the path of life," or "keeping the path of the tree of life." (For the identification of "the path of the tree of life" with "the path of life" see also in the Appendix.)

A combination of these components derived from the aforementioned biblical passages may be clearly observed in a saying attributed to Rabbi Aqiva, which will be discussed more thoroughly in the Appendix:

[And the Lord God said:] "Behold, the man has become [or: was] like one of us [knowing good and evil]" – [Man was]²⁷ like one of the ministering angels, but

²² Brock 1990b; see also Flusser 1991, esp. 168 n. 11.

²³ On the background of the verses in Deuteronomy and Jeremiah in the wisdom literature, see Weinfeld 1972, 307–10.

²⁴ *Fragment Targum* (ed. Klein, 224).

²⁵ *Targum Neofiti* Deut. 30.19 (Díez Macho 1968–79, 5.257).

²⁶ Or: distinction between good and evil.

²⁷ I.e. before the Fall. The verb הָיָה in this verse may be translated either as "has become" or as "was." According to the latter interpretation, Adam was created as one of the ministering angels, a quality that he lost after eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil; this apparently was R. Aqiva's intention; see also below.

God set before him two paths, the path of life and the path of death, and he chose for himself the path of death.²⁸

Unlike the saying of Rabbi El'azar ha-Moda'i cited above, other interpretations of Gen. 3.24 give prominence to the eschatological dimension involved in observance of the Torah. Thus, according to the Palestinian targums of Gen. 3.24 the purpose of the eschatological reward in paradise and Gehenna is to spur men to keep the "path of the tree of life," which is the Torah. Here is what the Palestinian targum has to say on this matter:

Gen. 3.22 And from him [i.e. from Adam] shall arise one nation [= Israel] who will know to distinguish between good and evil.²⁹ If he [= Adam] had observed the precepts of the Torah and fulfilled its commandments, he would live and endure forever like the tree of life. And now, since he has not observed the precepts of the Torah and has not fulfilled its commandments, behold I will banish him from the garden of Eden before he stretches out his hand and takes the fruit of the tree of life and eats of it and lives forever.³⁰

Gen. 3.24 Two thousand years before He created the world He had created the Torah; He had prepared the garden of Eden for the just and Gehenna for the wicked. He had prepared the garden of Eden for the just that they might eat and delight themselves from the fruit of the tree, because they had kept precepts of the Torah in this world and fulfilled its commandments. For the wicked He prepared Gehenna, which is comparable to a sharp sword³¹ devouring with both edges. He prepared within it darts of fire and burning coals for the wicked, to be avenged of them in the world to come because they did not observe the precepts of the Torah in this world. For Torah is the tree of life for everyone who toils in it and keeps the commandments: he lives and endures like the tree of life in the world to come. Torah is good for all who labor in it in this world like the fruit of the tree of life <<that God prepared to anyone who observes [or: keeps] it: to be alive and to walk in the paths of the path of life in the world to come>>.³²

These targumic passages might be compared to the following passage in the *Psalms of Solomon*, written in the first century BCE:

Faithful is the Lord. . . to those who walk in the righteousness of His ordinances, in the Law which He commanded us that we might live. The Lord's holy ones shall live by it for ever: the garden of the Lord, the trees of life, are His holy

²⁸ *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Vayehi*, 6 (112), according to a reading of a *Genizah* fragment.

²⁹ This sentence assumes the punctuation: לדעת טוב ורע, כאחד ממנו, see below, p. 155.

³⁰ According to the *Fragment Targum*: "And now I will banish him from the garden of Eden before he stretches out his hand and takes the fruit of the tree of life and eats of it and lives forever" (Klein 1980, 46). This is a literal translation of the Hebrew. The words "since he has not observed the precepts of the Torah and has not fulfilled its commandments" are clearly an insertion that does not fit well with the literal translation.

³¹ חרב שנונה (read: שנינה); cf. *Targum Onqelos*: דמתהפכא.

³² *Targum Neofiti* (Díez Macho 1968–79, 1.63–64). The words in brackets at the end occur only in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*.

ones. Their planting is rooted for ever: they shall not be pulled up all the days of heaven... but the Lord's holy ones shall inherit life with joy.³³

According to the elaborated passages in the Palestinian targum cited above, the Torah gives life like the fruit of the tree of life, and those who keep it are themselves immortal like the tree of life. Similarly in the Psalms of Solomon, the righteous are called "trees of life" in the Garden of Eden ("the garden of the Lord"),³⁴ gaining their life (i.e. immortality) through the observance of the life-giving Torah. They "walk in the righteousness of His ordinances," a metaphor that could fit "the path of the tree of life" in Gen. 3.24.

According to the targum, the words "to keep the path of the tree of life" were interpreted as referring to the study of the Torah and the observance of its commandments as well as to its reward, which is eternal endurance like the tree of life in the world to come, while "the flaming turning sword" is a fire which "is comparable to a sharp sword devouring with both edges," whose task is to punish those who did not observe the precepts of the Torah.

In this source "the flaming turning sword" is purely destructive. An ancient midrash, on the other hand, seems to interpret the word "sword" in a surprisingly constructive way. In *Genesis Rabbah* we read as follows:

"A flaming turning sword" (Gen. 3.24) in accordance with "and the day that comes shall set them aflame" (Mal. 3.19). "Turning" – because it (i.e. the fire of Gehenna) turns and revolves about a man and sets him on fire from head to foot. Adam wondered: Who will deliver my children from this flaming fire? Rabbi Huna said in Rabbi Aba's name: the sword of circumcision, as it is written, "make yourself knives of flint and circumcise again" (Josh 5.2). Our rabbis said: the sword of Torah, as it is written, "[God's praise in their mouth] and a two-edged sword in their hand" (Ps. 149.6).³⁵

The word "turning" is interpreted here explicitly as the fire which sets the human body in flame, similarly to the elaborated Palestinian targum cited above. What is surprising in this source is, however, that it *contrasts* the destructive "flaming turning sword which sets a man on fire" with a constructive "sword" which delivers from hellfire, constituting an important positive religious principle. The "turning sword" has indeed turned its direction in this midrash!³⁶

³³ *Psalms of Solomon* 14.1–10, tr. S.P. Brock, in Sparks 1984, 673.

³⁴ In the *Hodayot*, too, the members of the sect are called "trees of life" (see above, pp. 139–40). The similarity between the *Hodayot* and the verse in the *Psalms of Solomon* has been noted (Licht 1957, 132). See also Kugel 1998, 138–39; Daniélou 1961, 33–48.

³⁵ *Gen. Rab.* 21.9 (203–04).

³⁶ One wonders whether according to a covert midrash, the "turning" of the sword was conceived of as the turning point from destructive to constructive: the "turning sword" is mentioned exactly

Torah and circumcision are, for the sages in the passage above, the two fundamental principles that provide protection from Gehenna. The idea that Torah or circumcision can protect one from Gehenna is also found in midrashic interpretations of the verse “Therefore Sheol enlarged its appetite and opened its mouth without measure (*livli hoq*)” (Isa. 5.14); the word “Sheol” is taken to refer to Gehenna in midrashic literature, and the expression *livli hoq*, “without *hoq*,” was interpreted either as “without law” or as “without circumcision.” According to one midrash, Gehenna opens its mouth “even for him who leaves undone even a single statute,” or “he who has not studied a single statute,”³⁷ while according to other midrashim³⁸ Gehenna is shut for the circumcised, and opens its mouth to those who are “without circumcision.”³⁹

Let us examine the apotropaic aspects of each of these two principles:

(1) *The Torah*. That Torah saves and protects one from eternal death and affliction (Gehenna) and grants eternal life in Paradise (or in the world to come), was a fundamental principle of the sages (rooted in the Second Temple period). The Torah was perceived as life-giving in many biblical passages, some of which we have seen above. While in the biblical passages, the “life” obtained by Torah is this-worldly, in post-biblical times it was clear to those who believed in the Afterlife, that the “life” promised in those biblical passages is first of all eternal life in the world to come⁴⁰ and that Torah protects one from the eternal calamities of Gehenna. The imagery of the Law as a weapon can also be found in various contexts in the writings of the sages. A noteworthy comparison is provided by the following passage from the *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*:

Rabbi Samuel bar Naḥman used to say: Words of the Torah are like weapons; as weapons stand up in battle for their owners, so do words of the Torah stand up for him who valorously gives them the labor that they require. What is the proof for that? “God’s praise in their mouths and a two-edged (*piḥyyot*) sword in their hand” (Ps. 149.5)... Rabbi Neḥemiah said: *piḥyyot* – an edge (*pe*) that has two edges (*piyyot*), a sword devouring with both edges and giving life in this world and in the world to come. Rabbi Aḥa said: Words of the Torah are mighty to retaliate against him who does not give them the labor they require.⁴¹

between the eschatological flames and the “keeping of the path of the Tree of Life.” Admittedly, this cannot be read into the *wording* of the midrash in *Genesis Rabbah*, although it suits the intrinsic logic of this midrash and of other midrashim on this verse, as we saw above.

³⁷ *b. Sanh.* 110a. ³⁸ *Tanhuma Buber, Hayye Sarah* 6; *Tanhuma*, printed edition, *Lekh Lekha* 20.

³⁹ For the usage of the word *hoq* for circumcision, see חוק בשאר שם (*t. Berakhot* 6.13 [ed. Lieberman, 37]; בבשרו כרת לו חק (*Sir.* 44.20).

⁴⁰ See, e.g. Evans 1997; Gathercole 2004.

⁴¹ *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana, Bahodesh*, 5 (ed. Mandelbaum, 207); the translation is based on Braude and Kapstein 1975, 231–32, with many alterations.

Note that the phrase “devouring with both edges” is identical to the formulation in the targumic passage to Gen. 3.24 cited above: “Gehenna, which is comparable to a sharp sword devouring with both edges.”⁴² Putting the tradition of the targum and the saying of Rabbi Nehemiah in *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana* side by side, one could venture to reconstruct a more complex midrash: a constructive two-edged sword, Torah, versus a destructive two-edged sword, Gehenna.

(2) *Circumcision*. Since early antiquity, circumcision was thought to protect one’s life from danger of death. The apotropaic power of circumcision is evident in Ex. 4.24–26.⁴³ In post-biblical exegesis the apotropaic aspects of circumcision are occasionally associated with the *karet* (“extirpation”) punishment for not observing the commandment of circumcision (Gen. 17.14): “Any circumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” In the *Book of Jubilees* we read as follows (15.26):

Anyone who has been born, the flesh of whose foreskin has not been circumcised by the eighth day does not belong to the children of the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham. . . there is no sign on him that he belongs to the Lord, but [he is meant] for destruction, for being destroyed from the earth, and for being uprooted from the earth because he has broken the covenant of the Lord our God.⁴⁴

The same idea is expressed in the traditional blessing said during the circumcision ceremony: “Therefore the living God, who is our portion, saves our beloved kin (lit.: flesh) from perdition” (על כן אל חי חלקנו להציל) (ידידות שארנו משחת).⁴⁵ A comparison of this blessing with the passage cited above from the *Book of Jubilees* demonstrates, as I have noted elsewhere, that the word שחת in the former means “perdition,” the punishment for those not circumcised according to Gen. 17.14, *karet* in rabbinic terminology.⁴⁶ As the belief in an afterlife became entrenched, the apotropaic aspects of circumcision in this world were transformed into a belief that it protected one also after his death. According to *Genesis Rabbah*, Joseph

⁴² See also: “but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps follow the path to Sheol” (Prov. 5.4–5). It could be inferred from this verse that Sheol, i.e. Gehenna, is a two-edged sword.

⁴³ Loewenstamm 1971, 327; Baumgarten 1981, 222–23.

⁴⁴ VanderKam 1989, 92, slightly altered.

⁴⁵ See *t. Ber.* 6.13 (37); Kister 1989.

⁴⁶ According to my interpretation, the word שחת is derived from the root שח' rather than from the root שח'. The interpretation of the biblical word שחת as derived from the root שח' is attested in the Septuagint rendering διαφθορά. A similar usage of the word שחת is demonstrated by some passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

forced the Egyptians to circumcise, and they said, “you gave us life in this world and in the world to come.”⁴⁷ The very act of circumcision, even if it is forced, is portrayed as having immense power in itself not only during one’s life but also in the afterlife.

The circumcised were thought to be protected from having to descend into Gehenna. Thus we read in two conflicting midrashim, the first from the classical amoraic midrash composition *Genesis Rabbah* and the second one from a later anonymous midrashic composition (with an anti-Christian flavor) found in the *Genizah*:⁴⁸

(1) “At the entrance of the tent” (Gen. 18.1)... Rabbi Levi said: In the world to come Abraham will sit in the entrance to Gehenna, and permit no Jew to descend therein. What then will he do to those who have sinned very much? He will remove the foreskin from babes who died before circumcision and set it upon them [= the sinners] and then let them descend into Gehenna. Hence it is written: *שלה ידו בשלומיו חלל בריתו*, “He has reached out his hands against those that were whole [= circumcised], He has profaned his covenant” (Ps. 55.21).

“In the heat of the day” (Gen. 18.1), when the day comes, of which it is written: “and the day that comes shall set them aflame” (Mal 3.19).⁴⁹

(2) It is written “if not for my covenant, I would not have established day and night <<and ordinances of heaven and earth>>” (Jer. 33.25)⁵⁰ and it is written “He has reached out his hands to those that were whole, he has profaned his covenant” (*שלה ידו בשלומיו חלל בריתו*; Ps. 55.21). Had the Holy One not foreseen that Abraham’s posterity would be killed and give their lives for the observation of circumcision, He would not have created heaven and earth, as it is written, “if not for my covenant, I would not have established day and night.” What does it mean *hillel berito* (probably understood: “[He has reached out his hands] against him that profaned his covenant”) – to indicate how great is the power of circumcision: even a sinner, if he is circumcised, does not see Gehenna, and everyone who is uncircumcised – Gehenna opens her mouth and swallows him... and everyone who is circumcised, even if he and his fathers are sinners, Gehenna has no power over him, but those who denied circumcision (*כפרו במילה*), the Holy One delivers them into the hands of angels of destruction, and they throw them into the fire of Gehenna and it sets them on fire for they profaned the covenant of the Holy One (i.e. circumcision).⁵¹

⁴⁷ *Gen. Rab.* 90.6 (1106).

⁴⁸ Ginzberg 1928 and his Introduction, 216–17.

⁴⁹ *Gen. Rab.* 48.8 [483]; the translation is based on Freedman *et al.* 1951, 1.409–10, with several alterations. For the interpretation of Ps. 55.21 note also Ps. 55.24: “You, O God, will cast them down to the deepest pit (*באר שחת*)”, which is Gehenna, according to rabbinic terminology.

⁵⁰ According to a current midrashic interpretation of this verse; see, e.g. *m. Nedarim* 3.11. Note that the same motif occurs in the parallel passage in *Genesis Rabbah* (just before the saying of Rabbi Levi cited above): “If not for you, I have not created heaven and earth... sun... moon...” without citing Jer. 33.25.

⁵¹ Ginzberg 1928, 220–21.

According to the second cited midrash, circumcision has an absolute power to protect one from Gehenna, regardless of any other considerations. This continues the line of other statements, mentioned above, concerning the deliverance from Gehenna guaranteed for the circumcised. Rabbi Levi's utterance in *Genesis Rabbah* shares the presumption of the apotropaic power of circumcision, but realizes the conflict between this seemingly absolute power and the principles of divine justice, both with respect to babes who have not been circumcised when they died and with respect to sinners who escape punishment due to being circumcised. Rabbi Levi solves this dilemma by stating that Abraham will make the sinners uncircumcised and turn uncircumcised babes into circumcised. The absolute apotropaic power of circumcision seems ultimately to be retained in Rabbi Levi's utterance, but in fact it is undermined, indeed subverted. Paul's words, "Circumcision indeed is of value (ὠφέλει) if you keep the Law; but if you break the Law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision" (Rom. 2.25) comes to mind. Paul drew the radical conclusion that "true circumcision is not something external and physical" (Rom. 2.28). In the midrash attributed to Rabbi Levi we see the full revolutionary potential of this line of thought within the Jewish-halakhic framework, which ascribes utmost importance to (physical) circumcision.⁵²

For the matter at hand, at any rate, what is important is the clearly apotropaic function ascribed to circumcision, in this case saving one from falling into Gehenna.

In Christianity, circumcision was replaced by baptism, and the two were considered related at least by some Church Fathers.⁵³ The two rituals,

⁵² While the composition concerning the "contradictory biblical verses" may well be of a later date than *Genesis Rabbah*, the former reflects the ancient apotropaic notion, while the latter reflects a more complex, almost paradoxical view. It is not impossible that the latter was rejected by the former due to anti-Christian polemic, and yet the view expressed in it is an ancient one, tackled and modified in Rabbi Levi's utterance according to *Genesis Rabbah*. Although Paul preceded Rabbi Levi by almost three hundred years, I find it quite unlikely that the Rabbi's statement was influenced by the Apostle's. As we have seen, Rabbi Levi's statement is a modification of an ancient view concerning the absolute power of deliverance attributed to circumcision. The modification, which emerged due to internal Jewish theological difficulties, could well be radically developed by Paul.

⁵³ Origen says: "Until the blood of Jesus was given, which was so precious that it alone would suffice for the redemption of all, it was necessary for those who were being trained up in the law to offer their own blood for themselves as a kind of foreshadowing of the future redemption. And therefore... we do not have... to offer the blood of circumcision" (Origen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 11, 13, 29 [PG 14, 911C–D]). Cyprian argues as follows: "infants, you said, ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after they were born, and the law of the ancient circumcision must be considered. You thought that he who was born should not be baptized and sanctified within eight days" (Letter 64.2 [Donna 1964]). Ephrem compares the anointment ritual before baptism to circumcision (Beck 1959, 146–54; see also Brock 1979).

circumcision and baptism, redeem from Gehenna according to Judaism and Christianity, respectively; this raises the theological question of how uncircumcised or unbaptized babes are to attain salvation.⁵⁴ Isidore of Pelusium (fourth-century CE) provides an example of a conscious awareness of the relationship between the apotropaic dimension of circumcision in Judaism and of baptism in Christianity. According to him, Zipporah circumcised her son (Ex. 4.24–26) in a time of danger, just as babes are baptized when their lives are at risk. He explains that the “mystery” of the circumcision overpowered the angel of death, for “the Jews used circumcision instead of baptism.”⁵⁵ In other words, circumcision is perceived as precursor of baptism. That baptism has also had an influence on the way in which circumcision has been interpreted in a non-Christian milieu can be seen in a Samaritan poem attributed to the fifth-century sage Marqe,⁵⁶ in which circumcision is compared to baptism: “Happy is the child who has worn it (= circumcision) first, which is a baptism purifying without water.”⁵⁷

So far we have elucidated the Jewish background for the exegesis of Gen. 3.24 in *Genesis Rabbah* 21.9 (above, p. 146), and the internal motives for the introduction of Torah and circumcision, into the Jewish interpretation of this verse. Now we can look into a striking cultural and exegetical Christian parallel to this midrash⁵⁸ in Ephrem’s commentary on the *Diatessaron*. While dealing with the verse “But one of the soldiers pierced his [the crucified Christ’s] side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water” (John 19.34), Ephrem addresses Christ saying:

I ran to all your limbs, and from all I received every kind of gift. Through the side I pierced with the sword I entered the garden fenced with the sword. Let us enter in through that side which was pierced, since we were stripped naked by the counsel of the rib that was extracted. The fire that burnt in Adam, burnt him in that rib of his. For this reason the side of the second Adam has been pierced, and from it comes a flow of water to quench the fire of the first Adam.⁵⁹

Robert Murray and Sebastian Brock have demonstrated that in Syriac literature one frequently encounters the contrasting parallelism between

⁵⁴ Lieberman 1965 (repr. Lieberman 1974, 265–67); see also Aptowitz 1926, 127.

⁵⁵ Le Boulluec 1987, esp. 78–79.

⁵⁶ The poem is in good Aramaic and ends in some verses in corrupted Greek; it was thus no doubt written in the Roman-Byzantine period.

⁵⁷ טובי ילידה דלבוש בה קמאה דו מצבוע מדכי דלא במים: Ben-Hayyim 1957, 260–61. See his comments on these verses.

⁵⁸ For a variety of Christian homilies based on this verse against the background of early Jewish exegesis see Alexandre 1986.

⁵⁹ Leloir 1963, 214 (xxi, 10).

“the flaming turning sword” (Gen. 3.24) which barred Adam from paradise, and the spear which reopened paradise, the spear which pierced Christ on the cross, and which caused water and blood to flow from his body, thereby reopening the gates of paradise.⁶⁰ “The Fathers regularly understand the ‘water’ as baptismal water and the ‘blood’ as the Blood of the Eucharist”;⁶¹ this interpretation may well be hinted by Ephrem in his commentary on the *Diatessaron*, although he does not say so explicitly.

Murray has pointed out a special linguistic usage in this passage: “Ephrem... uses the same word, *rumḥa*, for the soldier’s lance and for the flaming sword of the cherubim (Gen. 3.24), when it is not only inappropriate for the latter, but is also contrary to the whole Syriac biblical tradition, which like the targum uses *ḥarba*, sword.”⁶² Another fact deserves to be mentioned here: Ephrem first refers to Adam’s “side” but then speaks of his “rib.” Such a connection is natural to an interpreter of the Greek Bible, for in Greek the same word, *πλεῦρα*, is used both in Genesis (LXX 2.22) and in John 19.34 (unlike the Peshitta, which uses ܠܡܝܢ in Gen. 2.22 and ܠܡܝܢ in John). The use of “spear” instead of “sword” in Gen. 3.24 may be more easily accounted for in Greek than in Syriac. The Septuagint uses the word *ρομφαία* in Genesis 3.24, and the Gospel of John reads *λόγχη*. Now, the word *ρομφαία* usually renders *חֶרֶב* (“sword”) in the Septuagint, but also *רומח*, *חנית* (“spear,” “lance”; LXX 1 Chr. 11.11, 20; Murray points to Josephus’ *Jewish Antiquities* 4.153 and *Biblical Antiquities* 47.1 [both paraphrasing Num. 25.7] and to the Syriac translation of the Greek 1 Maccabees).⁶³ Murray’s linguistic findings in Greek show that the Greek word could be understood as spear by a speaker of Greek with no midrashic purpose or bilingual abilities.⁶⁴ A reader of Greek who understood the verse in Genesis in this way could well have connected it to the verse in John, even though another word, *λόγχη*, is used there.⁶⁵ It seems quite plausible, then, that this Christian “midrash” was originally formulated in Greek,⁶⁶ and that Ephrem derived it, probably indirectly, from a

⁶⁰ Murray 1973; Brock 1978. ⁶¹ Brock 1978, 464. ⁶² Murray 1973, 224.

⁶³ Murray 1973, 228–29. There he also refers to a note on Num. 25.7 by Field in his edition of the *Hexapla* (Field 1875, 1.257 n. 8).

⁶⁴ See *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines* 4.865 s.v. *ρομφαία*; See also Hesychius’ lexicon, in which *ρομφαία* is defined: *Θράκιον ἀμυντήριον, μάχαιρα, ξίφος, ἢ ἀκότιον μακρόν* (Hansen 2005, 3.245; cf. Suidas, *Lexicon* ed. Adler 1935, 4.299). Procopius of Gaza attests that it could be understood as *δορύ* or *ξύφος*.

⁶⁵ Such a reader could have connected the lance of the crucifixion and Gen. 3.24 to Luke 2.35, where the word *ρομφαία* is used.

⁶⁶ We do not have to hypothesize an underlying exegetical interpretation by Tatian, the author of the *Diatessaron*, or by another Syriac writer prior to Aphrahat, as proposed by Murray 1973, 230, 232.

Greek source.⁶⁷ The conclusion would be that the motif of “the lance that reopened Paradise,” current in Syriac literature, did not originate in this literature.

The use of materials borrowed from Greek by Ephrem the Syrian might be of some significance in estimating cultural transitions within (eastern) Christianity. But for the purposes at hand it makes little difference whether the original Christian “midrash” in this case was formulated in Greek or in Syriac. More significant is the question of how the statement contained in Ephrem’s commentary concerning the lance that reopened paradise is related to the Jewish statement discussed above concerning the sword that saves and protects from Gehenna, a sword identified as Torah or circumcision. Both the Jewish and the Christian biblical interpretations deal with the means of redemption. The redemption of Torah and circumcision on the Jewish side are symmetrical to the redemption of Christ on the Christian side, especially if the latter is attained through Eucharist and baptism. Certainly there are differences between the Jewish and the Christian statements: the Christian “soteriology” of return to paradise is different from the Jewish concept of salvation from the flames of Gehenna. The specific theological content is different in each of the two, but the exegetical context and the theological pattern of the Jewish and the Christian midrashic statements are very similar in spite of (or perhaps because of) the exclusive Jewish and Christian values expressed in them.

It could be argued that the Jewish midrash is responding to the Christian soteriological assertion, namely that the sword of Torah and circumcision replace Eucharist and baptism. After all, the contrasting parallelism between the “flaming turning sword” and the spear which pricked Christ, the Second Adam, bringing eternal life to humankind, is rather natural for a Christian,⁶⁸ whereas the constructive role of “sword” in the Jewish tradition is somewhat surprising.⁶⁹ But the examination of Jewish texts demonstrates the ancient apotropaic power attributed in Judaism to Torah and circumcision as well as the exegetical background to this midrash of Gen. 3.24, which is quite intelligible on internal Jewish assumptions as an interpretation of the Hebrew text of this verse. It may well be,

⁶⁷ A Christian “midrash” of this type can be found in the writings of Severian of Gabala, a Syrian Church Father who was a few decades younger than Ephrem (died in 408 CE). See: Petit 1991, 1.203–04; also Procopius of Gazza, Commentary on Genesis, *PG* 87/1, 176A–B; cf. Alexandre 1986, 408 n. 37.

⁶⁸ Based, of course on 1 Cor. 15.35–47. On this passage see Kister 2010.

⁶⁹ But see above, n. 36.

then, that the Jewish interpretation of Gen. 3.24 was the result of a development inside Judaism. Be that as it may, the Jewish midrashic statement probably obtained an additional, most significant dimension when uttered in the context of the inter-religious debate with Christianity, stressing two fundamental Jewish values as contrasted with corresponding Christian ones. Even if the conceptual components antedated Christianity, they probably became tinted with an anti-Christian hue in the historical context of the confrontation with Christianity. Most significant, perhaps, is the close affinity between the Jewish and Christian exegetical and theological patterns, so close in fact that the mutually antagonistic early Jewish and Christian interpretations turn out to have been two early variations of the very same theological pattern. It is not enough, however, to show the *synchronic* symmetry between Jewish and Christian interpretations, as if it reflects a static state of Jewish-Christian debate; it must be seen in the *diachronic* context, and elucidated in the context of the exegetical and ideological dynamics active in Judaism at least since the Second Temple period. The ripe fruit of these dynamics may be seen in passages of targum and midrash, which occasionally demonstrate a dialectical relationship with the newly emerged, Christology-focused Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

APPENDIX

Above (p. 143) we noted the relationship of “knowledge of good and evil” to “the path of life” that should be chosen (cf. Deut. 30.15, 19), identified with “the path of the tree of life.” This combination of components is the key to understanding R. Aqiva’s interpretation in the tannaitic midrash, *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael*:⁷⁰

Rabbi Pappias expounded: “[And the Lord God said:] ‘Behold, the man has become [or: was] like one of us [knowing good and evil].’” (Gen. 3.22) Rabbi Aqiva said to him: “That is enough, Pappias.” – [Rabbi Pappias asked:] “How do you interpret ‘Behold, the man has become’ [etc.]?” – [Rabbi Aqiva said:] “[Man was]⁷¹ Like one of the ministering angels, but God set before him two paths, the path of life and the path of death, and he chose for himself the path of death.”

⁷⁰ *Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Vayehi*, 6 (112), according to a *Genizah* fragment (Kahana 2005, 1.61). Kahana pointed out the fragment’s importance for understanding the text (Kahana 1986, 504–15; Hebrew [N.B.: The passage cited on p. 508 of the latter article contains a severe printing error; it should read: מדרש ר' פפיס: הן האדם היה כאחד ממנו]).

⁷¹ See n 27.

This is a translation of the *Mekhilta* according to the reading of a *Genizah* fragment. Menachem Kahana has suggested⁷² that Rabbi Pappias' interpretation was too audacious to be put down in writing.⁷³ Rabbi Aqiva's view, according to this reading, is strikingly similar to one of Philo's assertions concerning the first man:

Yet though he should have kept that image undefiled... when *the opposites were set before him* (= Adam) *to choose or avoid* (προτεθέντων εἰς αἱρέσεις καὶ φυγὰς ἐναντίων), good and evil, honourable and base, true and false, he was quick to *choose the false*, the base and the evil and spurn the good and honourable and true, with the natural consequence that he *exchanged mortality for immortality*... (*On Virtues* 205)⁷⁴

According to this passage of Philo, the first man, who was immortal,⁷⁵ became mortal because he made the wrong choice of the opposites that had been set before him. Rabbi Aqiva's view (according to this reading) is that God created man similar to the angels (thus immortal), but obliged him to choose between the path of good and the path of evil, the path of life and the path of death. Adam lost eternal life because of his wrong choice. This is almost identical to Rabbi Aqiva's midrash, according to the reading of the *Genizah* manuscript.

According to this reading of *Mekhilta de Rabbi Yishmael*, both Rabbi Aqiva and Pappias punctuated the verse in the same manner: "Adam was like one of us, knowing good and evil." However, according to parallel texts, *Mekhilta de Rabbi Shim'on ben Yohai* and *Genesis Rabbah*, Rabbi Aqiva and Pappias differ in punctuating the biblical verse. Pappias is said to have explained the clause "Behold, the man was like one of us" as meaning "as one of the ministering angels," to which R. Aqiba responded: "God set two paths before him, the path of life and the path of death, and he chose the path of death."⁷⁶ It has been noted long ago that Rabbi Aqiva's opinion according to this version is associated with the punctuation of the verse in Symmachus' Greek translation of Genesis, the Aramaic Targums, and the

⁷² Kahana 1986, 509–10, and 511–12, n. 116.

⁷³ The audacious explanation could be the plain meaning of the verse: God feared *lest* man, who possessed knowledge of good and evil like Himself and the angels, would partake of the tree of life as well.

⁷⁴ Translation according to F.H. Colson (ed. and tr.), *Philo with an English Translation in Ten Volumes* (London: W. Heinemann, 1939; *LCL*) 8.289.

⁷⁵ Runia remarks, concerning a similar passage of Philo (*On the Creation of the Cosmos* §152): "[Philo] must take immortality here in a more restricted sense, i.e. a spiritual condition" (Runia 2001, 359). If this was indeed Philo's position, it is probably his interpretation for a more ancient tradition, according to which Adam had been immortal before he sinned.

⁷⁶ See *Mekhilta de Rabbi Shim'on ben Yohai* to Exodus 14.29 (ed. Epstein-Melamed, 68); see also Kahana 2005, 1.161; *Gen. Rab.* 21.5 (200).

midrash. According to these sources the Hebrew should be punctuated: *הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאֶחָד, מִמֶּנּוּ לְדַעַת טוֹב וְרָע*, literally: “Adam was like the One, from him the knowledge of good and evil,” i.e. the knowledge of good and evil depends on a man’s own resolution (the word *מִמֶּנּוּ* is thus understood as the third person singular rather than first person plural).⁷⁷

In other parallels, *Canticles Rabbah* and *Exodus Rabbah*,⁷⁸ the words *הָאָדָם הָיָה כְּאֶחָד מִמֶּנּוּ*, “Adam was like one of us,” are explained by Rabbi Pappias as “Adam was like the One,” i.e. “like the Single One of the World” (כִּיחִידוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם), an epithet of God.⁷⁹ This is also the explanation of the *amora* Rabbi Yehuda ben Rabbi Simon according to *Genesis Rabbah*.⁸⁰ A striking parallel to this statement may be found in another passage of Philo:

As long as he (the first man) was single (εἷς), he resembled God and the cosmos in his solitariness (ὡςμοιούτο κατὰ τὴν μόνωσιν κόσμῳ καὶ θεῷ) receiving the delineations of both natures in his soul, not all of them but as many as a mortal constitution could contain... (*On the Creation of the Cosmos*, §151)⁸¹

Philo goes on to say that the creation of Eve caused the (positive) desire for procreation and then the negative desire for bodily pleasure (§§151–52). The creation of the woman substantially changed Adam’s solitary existence. The rabbis infer this in *Genesis Rabbah* from Gen. 3.22: “Adam was (like) One,” but after the creation of “(she who was created) from him (*mimmenu*), he knew good and evil,” i.e. the creation of Eve led him to the knowledge of evil.⁸²

It has been shown that Philo follows here a Platonic notion concerning the solitariness of God and the cosmos.⁸³ Yet the similarity between the passages in Philo and in *Genesis Rabbah* is so striking that the possibility that §151 is related to an interpretation of Gen. 3:24 according to a reading of the Hebrew text⁸⁴ should be seriously considered.

⁷⁷ See Geiger 1857, 328; Geiger 1862, 42–43; Salvesen 1991, 16–18; see also Kogut 1994, 218–20; Ofer 2001.

⁷⁸ *Cant. Rab.* 1.9; *Exod. Rab.* 4.3 (ed. Shinan, 148).

⁷⁹ In the Palestinian targumim Adam’s singleness in the world is compared to God’s singleness in heaven. For an elaboration of this comparison, see *Pirke de-Rabbi Eli’ezer* ch. 12.

⁸⁰ *Gen. Rab.* 21.5 (200).

⁸¹ Translated by Runia 2001, 87.

⁸² *Gen. Rab.* 21.5 (201).

⁸³ Runia 2001, 356.

⁸⁴ The Septuagint rendering of the verse does not allow the midrashic interpretation given to the Hebrew text. If Philo borrowed the tradition *indirectly* from a midrash on the Hebrew text, he did not realize the textual-exegetical dimension of this tradition, and made use of it because it fit well his Platonic thought.

*Erotic Eden: a rabbinic nostalgia for paradise**Galit Hasan-Rokem*

Unlike in the Hebrew Bible, for the Rabbis of late antiquity there were already two kinds of paradise, as E. E. Urbach has pointed out:¹ the one that was lost to our first ancestors and the one that we may all gain, sometimes also known as “the world to come,” and sometimes even as the “days of the Messiah.” The borders between them were somewhat blurred but presumably there was a connection between them, although how the paradise that had been lost by Adam and Eve became the abode of the righteous in the future – and possibly also houses them at this very moment when we who are alive still trod this Vale of Tears – was not narrated straightforwardly by the Rabbis. The explanatory plot for this etiology thus needs to be found elsewhere and is indeed amply documented in various Jewish-Hellenistic sources. One instance is the famous words of Jesus on the cross to the “good thief” crucified together with him, inviting him after death to reconvene in the place which he calls by the name that the Septuagint had used for the Garden of Genesis, παράδεισος, identifying paradise with the kingdom of heaven (Luke 23.43). Paul seems to have had a similar notion of paradise according to 2 Corinthians 12.4 as many scholars including G. Scholem have noticed.² Some, including R. Elior,³ have emphasized the paradisiacal elements included in the description of the temple, even the earthly one in Jerusalem, but especially the celestial temple that became the goal of mystical journeys.

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¹ Urbach 1975, 311.

² See especially Scholem 1965a, 14–19 (“The Four who Entered Paradise and Paul’s Ascension to Paradise”): “That the biblical word *pardes* was in fact used as the technical term for the heavenly paradise in the oldest Jewish esoteric writings has now been finally proven by findings made in the Qumran caves” (p. 16); see also Scholem 1965b, 57.

³ Elior 2004, 41, 57, 66, 69, 128–29, 160, 178, 245–49: “The Pardes or the Garden of Eden is a celestial model of the earthly Temple on the Day of Atonement” (p. 246).

Y. Liebes,⁴ P. Schäfer, and others have emphasized the esoteric potential of the Garden as embodied in the famous entrance of the four sages into the Pardes, recounted in various sources, both in characteristically rabbinic ones,⁵ and in other largely contemporary texts such as the Hekhalot literature.⁶

My discussion of the rabbinic nostalgia for paradise investigates a less spectacular and less elitist cultural domain than the paths of the mystics or the imaginations of the priests. I wish to explore what kind of conceptual, emotional, and imaginary resource *Gan Eden*, paradise, may have been for late antique Jews on a more broadly available basis, as an almost, paradoxical as it may sound, quotidian image. The term “nostalgia” strikes me as particularly suitable for the bittersweet recollection and wishful thinking extant in some midrash texts on paradise, combining pain (*algos*) and return home (*nostos*). I am well aware of the fact that the term is an early modern invention with a particular semantic history, shifting from a diagnostic medical terminology to a more descriptive psychological and broadly cultural one.⁷ In the framework of literary hermeneutics a reading-back like this seems to be as legitimate as assuming that we are able to correctly interpret an ancient text referring to a variety of cognitive, emotional, and even physical experiences, such as recognition, pleasure, and hunger.

In her perspicacious study on longing, poet, literary critic, and folklorist Susan Stewart has characterized the nostalgia that *all narrative* reveals as “the longing for” the “place of origin.”⁸ The Garden of Eden must be seen as the ultimate place of origin not only in rabbinic literature but indeed in all monotheistic cultures. But we should also listen to her further, more problematized elaboration of the phenomenon of nostalgia: “By the narrative process of nostalgic reconstruction the present is denied and the past takes on an authenticity of being, an authenticity which, ironically, it can achieve only through narrative.”⁹ One could propose a number of reasons why specifically the Jews of Palestine in the fourth and fifth centuries would have wanted to deny the present and reconstruct an idealized, utopian, paradisiacal present. However, the longing for paradise that will be highlighted is not of the national collective character, but rather the

⁴ Liebes 1990. See also Scholem 1961, 52–53.

⁵ *T. Hag.* 2.3–4; *y. Hag.* 2.1 [77b]; *b. Hag.* 14b–15b; *Cant. Rab.* 1.4.

⁶ Schäfer 1984; Schäfer 1987–91, 3.5–17, 338–39, 4.72–77; Schäfer 1981, 18, nr 902→36\$, ll. 51–56; p. 19, 36\$, ll. 18–21; pp. 182–83, 426\$; p. 288, 7 ←888\$ (*Gan Eden*); pp. 144–45, 338\$, 344←338\$; p. 146, (671)344\$, (672)345\$; p. 147, 338→344\$, 339→345\$; pp. 230–31, 597 \$; pp. 246–47, 671\$, 672\$ (the texts in the Hebrew original); Elior 1982, 23, ll 42–55 (*Pardes*).

⁷ Starobinski 1966. Starobinski however points out that Johannes Hofer who coined the term in 1688 was inspired by a Greco-Roman medical tradition (Starobinski 1966: 84–85). See also Davis 1979.

⁸ Stewart 1984, xii. ⁹ Stewart 1984, 23.

longing of every human away from a historically unidentified burdened human condition.

In the wider cultural context of the fourth and fifth centuries – the relevant dates for the text to be analyzed below – it is interesting to point at the nostalgic look back that has been identified as a central mode of representation in Alan Cameron's characterization of Macrobius' *Saturnalia*. Cameron characterizes Macrobius' text as a nostalgic replay of the pagan past representing the complexity of the cultural values of a nobility undergoing Christianization.¹⁰ Reflecting on this Charles W. Hedrick Jr. has further connected the nostalgic gaze to the work of the historian with special reference to Tacitus writing as a survivor.¹¹ Hedrick generalizes from this not only on the historian's condition but on the human condition in general: "It is the experience of time through memory that makes us all simultaneously creatures of the past and inhabitants of the present: in this sense, we are (to use Tacitus' phrase) survivors of ourselves, and so can bear witness to what is no longer ... Certainly for Tacitus, the obligation to write history has much in common with the feelings that give rise to 'mourning and melancholy' and to nostalgia." Hedrick draws here visibly on Sigmund Freud and implicitly on Walter Benjamin whose concept of ruin developed in *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama* is explicitly connected by Hedrick to the feeling of nostalgia.¹²

It is thus with both Stewart's literary use and Cameron and Hedrick's historical use of the term nostalgia in mind that I shall look more closely at the narrativized juncture of sex, knowledge, and bliss characteristically derived from the exegesis of Genesis 4.1 *ve-ha-adam yada' et hava ishto*, by the King James Version simply rendered "And Adam knew Eve his wife" and by the New International Version somewhat unimaginatively explicated: "And Adam (or: the man) lay with his wife Eve." It is from this first human act outside the realm of Eden that the nostalgic stance becomes possible and maybe even necessary. The preceding verse nowadays closing chapter 3 is: "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every

¹⁰ Cameron 1966, 36. ¹¹ Hedrick 2000, 167–70.

¹² Hedrick 2000, 152. It is interesting to compare the cultural historians' application of a more dialogical model to the emergence of Christian Rome out of pagan Rome (compared with e.g. Bloch's earlier model), in parallel to some of our generations' rabbinics scholars' attempt to move from a confrontational, polemic interpretation of Jewish and Christian textual relations to a more dialogical perception, e.g. Hasan-Rokem 1998; Hasan-Rokem 2003; Boyarin 2004. A discussion of Freud's work on mourning and melancholia and the work done in its wake by many excellent scholars, not the least Julia Kristeva, could be very fruitful but remains beyond the scope of the present article.

way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (KJV). It is directly followed by the originary intercourse of Adam and Eve quoted above. Thus it stands before the readers as the first sovereign human act, the first one committed *outside* of Eden, without the parental care and the policing eye of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day as Adam and Eve were hiding among the trees. The social ethics of rabbinic literature is replete with the awareness that humans are actually created in order to proliferate, and God is described as spending His time, after the act of Creation was completed, making matches of human couples, who will consequently reproduce.¹³

Narrated from a male point of view the first act carried out after the expulsion from Eden is an entrance into the unknown interior of the single existing human *other* of the human male subject – the woman. The applicability of structural analysis is glaring, as Edmund Leach has observed in his Lévi-Strauss-inspired analysis of the Eden narrative.¹⁴ Male is to female like fiery sword is to the locked gate of the garden and so on. The stakes are no less than "the way of the tree of life" to which the access of humans now seems barred, but no less vital. Notably the other of Adam has been carved out of another, slightly more expansive version of himself. Knowing Eve thus also may be a path to self-knowledge – that is, a kind of mirror. Compensating the expulsion from the Garden with a cooperative entrance into the woman rhymes well with the feminist interpretation of Phyllis Tribble, highlighting the connections between Eden and the gardens of delight of the Song of Songs.¹⁵ Unlike Eve who is the object of the knowledge of Adam, the Shulamit of Solomon's Song has the capacity of knowledge, however admittedly twice expressed in the negative: "If you do not *know*, most beautiful of women, follow the tracks of the sheep" (NIV 1.8); and "Before I *knew* it, my desire set me among the royal chariots" (synthesized version 6.12). Yet the woman of the Song of Songs bears a clear similarity to paradise lost with its locked gates: "A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed." (KJV 4.12). There is thus more than a mere hint towards the idea that Eden may be metaphorically or metonymically represented or even present in sex.

Having quoted above Leach's application of Claude Lévi-Strauss' structural analysis to the biblical text,¹⁶ I would like to use this opportunity to

¹³ *Midrash Tanhuma* (ed. Warsaw 1873), 117 a–b (Ki Tissa § 5).

¹⁴ Leach 1969, 7–23 (especially pp. 12–18, 22–23). ¹⁵ Tribble 1978, 152–55.

¹⁶ Lévi-Strauss himself has famously avoided addressing the Hebrew Bible. When asked about this at a Q&A event for students at the Hebrew University in the mid 1980s, he replied enigmatically: "Je suis un homme Neanderthal."

emphasize that unlike the impression created by mechanical paraphrases and applications of the structuralist method, the binary opposition is not the end-all of the theory and its analytical method – it is rather the tool. A far more central concept in his thought is the idea of transformation, namely how the binary oppositions transform in the narrative, creating on one hand the plot and on the other hand encoding ever more cultural associations, values, and vital contents.¹⁷ Thus the Garden of Eden with the binary trees of knowledge and life transforms after the expulsion into the sexual act encompassing male and female in the act of “knowledge” (“Adam knew”) producing “life” (“and she conceived and bare Cain” [KJV]). What was inside the Garden embodied in the trees – nature – has outside of it become human potential and power – that is, culture – embracing the most fundamental (binary) terms of Lévi-Strauss’ theory.

In chapter 22 of *Genesis Rabbah* – commonly considered the first great aggadic midrash compilation of the Palestinian Amoraim, created in the early or mid fifth century – the opening verse of Genesis chapter 4 displaying the first couple’s intimacy is pondered and elaborated upon. It is first connected in a well-known poetic convention (*hariza*) to a verse from the Psalms, thus:

“And Adam knew Eve his wife” (Genesis 4.1) – “Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old” (Psalms 25.6, NIV). Rabbi Joshua Bar Nehemiah said: “The [verse refers to the fact] that you bestowed [your great mercy and love] upon the first human (*adam ha-rishon*) having said thus to him: ‘[but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,] for when you eat of it you will surely die’ (Genesis 2.17 NIV). And if you would not have given him one day of yours that is a thousand years, how would he have copulated/been able (*variae lectiones*) to produce offspring.”¹⁸

The text then returns in another conventional form characteristic of the homiletic genre of the *petihṭa* – proem – to the verse of origin “And Adam knew his wife Eve.” So the author of the midrash proposes that God’s act of mercy and loving kindness towards Adam consisted of lending him one day of His (assumedly interminable) number of days, a divine day of a thousand human years, so that the decree of mortality could be compensated by the blessing of offspring, and the loss of paradise by the pleasure of sex. Thereafter the midrash text continues in the same spirit:

¹⁷ This idea appears implicitly and explicitly in numerous instances of Lévi-Strauss’ enormous oeuvre, I shall refer here to one of the most obvious examples, the “Overture” to the first of the four volumes of “The Introduction to the Science of Mythology,” Lévi-Strauss 1969, 1–32 (especially pp. 2–3; 11; 13).

¹⁸ Ed. Theodor and Albeck 1965, 204.

“And Adam knew etc.” Rabbi Huna and Rabbi Ya’akov in the name of Rabbi Abba: “No creature had sex (*shimesh/shimsha*; *variae lectiones*) before *adam ha-rishon* (the first human; man), it is not said ‘Adam knew – *adam yada*’ but ‘and the Adam knew *ve-ha-adam yada*’ – which means that he let everyone know the way of the world (*derekh erets* – a standard euphemism for sex).”¹⁹

The midrashic technique here is to derive an additional aspect of meaning with the exegetical rule of *ribbui* from the seemingly extra letter *waw* and especially from the even more superfluous article *ha*, to widen the meaning of “know” to encompass letting everyone else know. Thus the human being is the originator of sexuality that consequently can by no means be understood to be considered by the Rabbis a degraded beastly praxis but is rather elevated to constitute God’s special and apparently primary gift to humans. The nostalgic perspective is highlighted in the phrase that then follows: “He knew from which serenity he was lifted out,” the emotionally already significant phrase gaining even more weight by its condensed melodious paronomasia: “*yada me-ei-zo shalva nishla*.”²⁰ The author has created a clever pun by activating the double meaning of the root *shin-lamed*²¹ denoting both quiet and lifting out, especially from a liquid.²² Thus the verb *nishla* refers to both, and one need not dismiss the association to human birth as another exit from the female body accompanied by liquid. The associative resonance of the sentence becomes sharper if we look carefully at some other collocations of the verb and the formulaic structure of the sentence. In the Babylonian Talmud *Shabbat* 107b (repeated in Babylonian Talmud *Ta’anit* 24a) the Babylonian Shmuel mentions among the acts forbidden on Shabbat due to the taking of a life, lifting out a fish from the sea: *hashole dag min ha-yam*. Whereas the Talmudic reference is absolutely literal, Rabbi Akiva has elsewhere in the Babylonian Talmud famously compared the Hadrianic decree against Torah study to the lifting out of fish from their natural element, water (*Berakhot* 61b; anonymously: *Avodah Zarah* 3b), followed by the story of his imprisonment that lead to his martyrdom. In the same associative field the formula *me-eizo shalva* “from which serenity” yields another stark association in a parable referring to the suffering during the Roman

¹⁹ Theodor and Albeck 1965, 204–05.

²⁰ Theodor and Albeck 1965, 205. I omitted *derekh shleva* of the London MS which is not reinforced by most *variae lectiones*.

²¹ For the Rabbis roots whose third letters were semi-vowels, such as in this case *waw* for *shalva* and *he* for *nishla*, were probably conceptualized as two-letter roots. I thank Aharon Maman for this helpful comment.

²² This part of the text is in Hebrew. In Aramaic only the meaning of “peace” seems to be extant for this root: Sokoloff 2002b, 551; Sokoloff 2002a, 1147.

oppression: "God may be likened to a king who had two sons. He became enraged at the first, took a stick thrashed him, drove him out to banishment and exclaimed: Woe to him! From what serenity has he been banished, *me-eizo shalva nigla*."²³ Significantly the opening section of chapter one of *Lamentations Rabbah* elaborates on the later destruction and banishment as punishments for the sin of Adam, due to the match of the non-vocalized spelling of the first word of Lamentations – *Eikha* – with the unusual spelling of God's question to Adam in the Garden, "Where are you – *Ayeka*?"²⁴ The phonological parallel of *nishla* and *nigla* alludes to the multiple connections between paradise and temple briefly mentioned above, as well as to the loss of both.

The nostalgic effect of an unattainable past's wholesomeness is reinforced also by the word *shalva* when describing the placid enemy compared to the suffering Jews in the scene where Rabbi Akiva laughs while his colleagues weep at the sight of the ruined temple narrated at the end of the last chapter of *Lamentations Rabbah*.²⁵ But *shalva* is also described as that attitude of easygoing satisfaction in which sins breed, with subsequent punishment, such as banishment.²⁶ On the other hand it appears numerous times as the term for the well-being of the righteous in the world to come – in that other aspect of paradise, *Gan Eden*.²⁷

The ancient Rabbis seem to have devised three major ways to attain paradise: 1. A righteous life earning an afterlife in paradise, not always an easy task. 2. Mystical meditations and journeys clearly reserved for the few elect. 3. Longing, nostalgia, and sex – available to most humans. But sexuality is a mixed blessing (which is nothing new): on one hand it is the one experience in which the human is momentarily experiencing paradise on this side of the fiery sword. On the other hand, in a characteristic interpretation of post-coital melancholy, the passing Eden of sex reminds humans again and again of the imagined lost totality of the past. The abundant mass of psychological, philosophical, and moral

²³ *Lam. Rab.* (ed. Buber 1899, 4, *petihta* 11 (2); cf. *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*, ed. Mandelbaum 1987, 1, 252.

²⁴ *Lam. Rab.* Buber 1899, 41. Both words are spelled with identical orthography of the consonants *aleph*, *yod*, *kaf*, *he* – standard for *Eikha* (seventeen occurrences in the Hebrew Bible) and *hapax legomenon* for *Ayeka*.

²⁵ *Lam. Rab.* Buber 1899, 159–60; an earlier version in the tannaitic *Sipre Devarim* §43. The text creates a convoluted double irony, since Rabbi Akiva's behavior is seemingly identical to the placid enemy's.

²⁶ *Sipre Devarim*, §318.

²⁷ E.g. *Gen. Rab.* ed. Theodor and Albeck 1965, 299; *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*, ed. Mandelbaum 1987, 146.

treatments of this perhaps regrettable situation prevents even a brief reference to them here. And it is not the contents of the experience and its thematic etiology that I am interested in presently, but rather the emotional and cognitive aspect of the moment itself – the nostalgia of the lost “garden.”

The emblematic role of the word *shalva* in the text invites a comparison to terms extant in the period and the immediate vicinity of the emergence of Genesis Rabba and prior to its editing, in the early Christian context as well as among authors associated with the sub-cultural formation generally known as Gnosticism.²⁸ My methodological impulse to interpret the specific paradisiacal imagery of Genesis Rabba in this particular text as popularly accessible may be reinforced by the frequent occurrences of the terms *katapausis* and *anapausis* in sources that have been characterized as sermons for wider audiences rather than theological exchanges among the learned, namely the NT *Epistle to the Hebrews* and the apocryphal *Gospel of Truth*.²⁹ The articulation of the concept of “rest” in these sources displays the same versatility encompassing a pre-existent condition as well as an eschatological proposition as the conceptualization of Gan Eden has been noted above to span in Rabbinic texts.³⁰ Judith Hoch Wray in her discussion points at the development of the term from its earliest Jewish Hellenistic occurrences as God’s rest after the work of creation to a category available for humans in an eschatological as well as an existential dimension. Otfried Hofius had identified the roots of the concept of “rest” as it emerges in the two above mentioned early Christian texts in Hellenistic Jewish eschatological writings such as the Fourth Ezra, the Testaments of Dan,³¹ Isaac and Jacob, Second Baruch, Joseph and Asenath, and Pseudo-Philo’s *Biblical Antiquities*.³² In parallel these texts would appear to be at least equally accessible sources for the Rabbinic perception of rest as the Alexandrian Gnostic texts that Ernst Käsemann has suggested as the main source for the concept of rest in the *Epistle to the*

²⁸ I thank Guy Stroumsa for sharing his insight and knowledge regarding the relevance of Gnostic discourse for the concept of “rest” that catapulted me to this path of inquiry.

²⁹ Attridge 1989, pp. 115–116, 122, 126–129. Incidentally, Attridge points out the similarity of the discourse of rest in *Hebrews* and the Rabbinic exegetical device of *gezera shawa* (his transcription), p. 128–129; Helderman 1984; Hoch Wray 1998. On p. 5 the characterization of both texts as “early Christian Sermons.”

³⁰ E.g. Helderman 1984, p. 4.

³¹ V, 12–13 explicitly mentions Eden.

³² Hofius 1970.

Hebrews and the *Gospel of Truth*.³³ It is, however, noteworthy that some of the Rabbinic sources quoted by Hoch Wray in the wake of Hofius' work (such as TB Ketubot 104a, TB Shabbat 152b)³⁴ do not express the concept of rest with the word *shalva* but apply other Hebrew and Aramaic alternatives and are less relevant for our discussion. The theme of the bridal canopy or bridal chamber occupying a special position in valentinian-gnostic texts³⁵ may be seen either as an echo or a possible dialogic stimulus to the erotic Eden projected in the Genesis Rabba text that is at the focus of the present discussion. Jan Helderma confirms the appearance of the topos of rest outside the realm of Gnostic texts,³⁶ summing up his discussion with the for the present discussion very helpful notion: "rest was and remained an important topos in the thought of the Hellenistic era."³⁷

The nostalgic picture of paradise embodied in bittersweet sexuality lends itself to the definition of heterotopia in Michel Foucault's terms.³⁸ Unlike the utopian idea of a paradise in the heavenly kingdom – as the one quoted from Jesus on the cross – or the mystical paradise of the riders of the chariot, the paradisiacal sexual experience mythically motivated by the well-known narrative sequence from Genesis,³⁹ embodies indeed the idea of the mirror that Foucault proposes as standing between the real and the unreal. As an object the mirror is real but the three-dimensional image in it is virtual, placeless like a utopia. Watching in the mirror the viewer sees herself where she is not, and in Foucault's words: "From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there," like Adam's, and consequently every human's, absence from paradise revealed nostalgically through the reminiscence of it, as in a mirror – the mirror of the other – during sex.

Yet another mirror-like image conjures up paradise embodying if not the very opposite of nostalgia at least an extremely tragic version of it, namely Walter Benjamin's "angel of history" fragment based on Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus*. The following quote is composed of fragments of a fragment: "It shows an angel who seems about to move away from something he stares at . . . His face is turned toward the past . . . The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed.

³³ Käsemann 2002, pp. 68–75.

³⁴ Hoch Wray pp. 14–15.

³⁵ Helderma pp. 294–298; see also the association of the themes of "seed" and "womb" related to rest and Paradise on p. 145.

³⁶ Helderma p. 318.

³⁷ Helderma p. 321 (my translation).

³⁸ Foucault 1984.

³⁹ Cf. Stewart's motivation by narrative quoted above.

But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that the angel can no longer close them.”⁴⁰ Paradise as conceptualized by Benjamin is the source of history visualized as a retreat from what the angel’s eyes can see in the past, and a reminder of the failure to mend the broken world. The nostalgic vision of paradise as presented by the Rabbis may seem singularly individualistic in comparison to the collective nightmare memory conjured by Benjamin’s angel. But nostalgia is finally also enveloped in a collective sense: “We are at home in it because it *is* our home – the past is where we come from.”⁴¹ And it is as part of the rabbinic culture’s “we” that the individually formulated nostalgia finding its fulfillment in sex is at least textually attainable, bridging the individual and the collective as a much later author has suggested: “The remembered past is both individual and collective. But as a form of awareness, memory is wholly and intensely personal...”⁴²

The nostalgic mirror of sex reflecting paradise presented in the simple text of *Genesis Rabbah* may be interpreted as a utopian vision of peace, *shalva*, when viewed as the complete reversal of Benjamin’s anti-nostalgic image of the horrified angel in whose eyes paradise is reflected as the source, not of temporary serenity of sexual pleasure, but as the tempestuous source of unconsummated love of the world. It is in this sense that the *Genesis Rabbah* text that has been discussed above finally brings together the various potentials of the expression *Gan Eden* as they were extant in the varied and multilayered Jewish society of late antiquity: the one that was lost to our first ancestors and the one that we may all gain, sometimes also known as “the world to come,” and sometimes even as the “days of the Messiah,” through the gift of sex nostalgically experienced in the temporary reminiscence of the eternal.

⁴⁰ From Walter Benjamin’s 1940 work “On the Concept of History” in Benjamin 1972, 1.691–704 (ET Benjamin 1996–2003, 4.392–93).

⁴¹ Lowenthal 1985, 4. ⁴² Lowenthal 1985, 194.

*Paradise for pagans? Augustine on
Virgil, Cicero, and Plato*

Gillian Clark

Who shared paradise in late antiquity? Was it only for Jews and Christians who shared a sacred text, or did pagans too have a dream of paradise as it had been and as it would be? This question can be approached through two of the most influential writers in western tradition: Virgil the classical poet and Augustine the Christian theologian. Augustine had good reason to take Virgil as the representative of Roman culture and belief. For Latin speakers of the late fourth century, education was based on Roman classical authors of four or five centuries earlier. Everyone who could afford more than primary education read some Virgil, and in later life could evoke this shared culture by references to him.¹ Augustine himself read Virgil as a schoolboy, taught Virgil in his years as a *grammaticus*, and knew how teachers could use Virgil as the basis for instruction not only in literature and history, but also in religion. Commentaries (*commentarii*) began as lecture notes on the text that students were reading, and in the surviving commentary by Augustine's contemporary Servius, there are historical explanations of Virgil's references to Roman religious tradition and philosophical interpretations of the truths symbolized by myths and cults. Such lectures might be the only religious instruction available to pagans, unless they went on to study philosophy, for temples and priests did not provide teaching.²

In the preface to *City of God*, addressing an educated audience, Augustine contrasted Scripture with Virgil, whom he did not need to name, quoting a line he did not need to identify: *parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*, the second half of Rome's mission statement.³ He confronted this claim to "spare the subject and fight down the proud" with one of his own favorite verses of Scripture, "God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble" (James 4.6). Throughout *City of God* Augustine used

¹ Courcelle 1984. Virgil in late antique education: Kaster 1988; MacCormack 1998.

² Clark forthcoming-a. ³ *V. Aen.* 6.853.

the tactic of invoking authorities recognized by his opponents, who did not recognize the authority of Scripture.⁴ He took Virgil as his principal spokesman for Roman values and beliefs, sometimes naming him, but more often calling him “the most famous Roman poet.” Poets make things up, but according to Augustine, Virgil spoke truth as well as falsehood.⁵ Virgil thought that he was praising Rome, but in fact he revealed the truth about the demonic gods of Rome, about the pride and domination at the heart of Roman values, and about Roman failure to imagine paradise past and to come. Did Augustine do Virgil justice? His younger contemporary Macrobius, an enthusiast for traditional Roman religion, wrote a Platonist commentary on the *Dream of Scipio*, the concluding vision of Cicero’s *Republic*, using Virgil as a source of religious truth. *Republic* and Platonist philosophy are constant presences in *City of God*. If Augustine had brought together Virgil, Cicero, and Plato, the greatest Latin classics with the highest form of philosophy, would he have found a recognizable paradise?

PARADISE LOST: THE GOLDEN AGE

Many cultures have a myth of paradise lost, a Golden Age before the time of farming and trade and politics, when life was simple and peaceful. Its setting is a benign natural environment: not necessarily a *paradeisos*, a garden planted by the Lord complete with trees and animals, but at least a rural landscape where living is easy and uncompetitive. Greek culture had traditions about the Golden Age and the benign rule of Kronos, father of Zeus, and Virgil (perhaps inspired by Euhemerus) equated them with Italian traditions about the benign rule of Saturn, father of Jupiter, when crops grew without farming, land and its produce was in common, and animals and humans posed no threat to one another.⁶ There were, and there still are, two contrasting stories of primitive human life. One is the “age of affluence” in which the earth meets all basic human needs, so people live peacefully without laws because they do not compete for land and its produce. This is still a powerful fantasy, though modern versions envisage a hunter-gatherer lifestyle; ancient versions prefer gathering, and reject animal food together with the blood sacrifice by which it is legitimized.⁷ The rival story is an age of struggle to survive in harsh conditions, where humans are vulnerable to predators until they develop social

⁴ *Civ. Dei* 4.1. ⁵ Poetic fiction: *Civ. Dei* 4.27, 6.5–7.

⁶ Lovejoy and Boas 1935, 55–58. ⁷ Primitive affluence: Sahlins 2004.

organization and farming and basic technology. Ancient versions usually ascribe these developments to named discoverers or founders.⁸

Virgil used both stories. In the *Georgics* Saturn belongs to the Golden Age before humans killed and ate animals or fought each other. Virgil contrasts war and politics with earlier and better forms of life: first with people who gathered fruit and crops, then with farmers who till the earth and raise cattle and crops. So it was when Rome was founded and “golden Saturn was leading this life on earth.”⁹ The *Aeneid* has a different account of primitive culture. King Latinus tells Aeneas that the Latins are Saturn’s people, who keep his ways by choice, not by constraint or laws.¹⁰ But King Evander, at the site of the future Rome, tells Aeneas how Saturn transformed the bleak lives of these hunter-gatherers who had neither custom nor culture, bringing them together and giving them laws: “when he was king, there was the age they call golden, so calm and peaceful was his rule.”¹¹ Saturn and the Golden Age come together again in Virgil’s vision of the future Rome, when Anchises says that Augustus “will once again found a golden age in Latium in the land once ruled by Saturn.”¹² Imagery widely used in the time of Augustus would prompt Virgil’s readers to hope that a golden age meant peace and plenty.¹³

How was this early Roman paradise lost? In the *Georgics* Virgil suggested that Jupiter did not want life to be easy and idle, and sharpened the wits of human beings by giving them problems to overcome.¹⁴ Virgil’s envisaged readers knew that Jupiter overthrew his father Saturn and established his own harsher regime. In the *Aeneid* Evander says that Saturn reigned “until gradually the age became worse and tarnished, and the madness of war and love of possession took over,” but gives no reason why this happened.¹⁵ Virgil reflects the uncertainty of Greco-Roman religious tradition, which did not provide an authoritative collection of sacred texts or a consistent story of creation and fall.¹⁶ When Homer and Hesiod called Zeus “father of gods and men,” they meant that he had authority, not that all humans and gods were his children or his creation. Hesiod told how woman was created, on the orders of Zeus, to make life difficult for man, but did not say how man came to be. In that story humans are victims of power-struggles among the gods, but Hesiod also described the relentless and unexplained decline of the Golden Age into silver and bronze and iron ages. Other stories told how some human committed a primal crime

⁸ Two models: Stoczkowski 2002, 3–28. ⁹ *G.* 2.536–40.

¹⁰ *Aen.* 7.202–04. ¹¹ *Aen.* 8.316–25. ¹² *Aen.* 6.792–94.

¹³ Zanker 1988, 167–83; Wallace-Hadrill 1982.

¹⁴ *G.* 1.125–28. ¹⁵ *Aen.* 8.326–27. ¹⁶ Absence of Scripture: G. Stroumsa 2008.

of arrogance against the gods, or of violence or cannibalism against fellow-humans, and all humanity suffered because of this alienation of humans from gods. Perhaps the Golden Age survived at the ends of the earth, in a peaceful society close to the gods.¹⁷ But in the Mediterranean world of possession and domination, it remained a poetic fantasy.

PARADISE, PASTORAL, AND PROPHECY

Donatus, teacher of Jerome and authority on Virgil, observed that pastoral poetry was a kind of image of the Golden Age.¹⁸ It is easy to see what he meant. In pastoral poetry there is no exploitation of the earth by towns and trade, or by mining and agriculture. The setting is a good green place, an imagined Italy or Sicily or Arcadia, where there are shady fruit-trees and springs of water and cool breezes, and shepherds tending their flocks have peace and leisure to sing.¹⁹ In Virgil's early pastoral poems, the *Eclogues*, this peace is fragile. Singers lose competitions and suffer unrequited love, shepherds are displaced by soldiers. But the Fourth Eclogue proclaims that the reign of Saturn will soon return, and its imagery brings together the various stories of the Golden Age and how it was lost. The age of iron will cease and a golden race will arise throughout the earth; any traces of our crime will be annulled, and the earth will be free from fear. The birth and growth of a child will bring flowers and crops, honey and wine, and peace between humans and animals. When he grows up trade and farming will not be needed, for every land will produce everything, and even the sheep will have ready-coloured wool. Augustine was not the first to identify the wonderful child with Christ.²⁰ But forty years before the birth of Christ, how did Virgil know?

Virgil's Golden Age often sounds like the Messianic prophecies of Isaiah, which he could have encountered in the Septuagint translation available to the Jewish community in Rome, or through the paraphrase of Isaiah in some of the texts known as Sibylline Oracles; or there may simply have been a range of common imagery.²¹ Augustine had a different

¹⁷ Humphries 2007; a Christian writer identified the land of the Camarini with Eden (Humphries 2007: 49–50).

¹⁸ Coleman 1977, 6–7.

¹⁹ Martindale 1997.

²⁰ McCormack 1998, 24–31; Edwards 2003, 45–53, on the Fourth Eclogue in the *Oration to the Saints* ascribed to Constantine. Jerome (*Ep.* 53.7) was not impressed by the claim that Virgil was a pre-Christian Christian.

²¹ Isa. 11: 1–9. Jewish community: Rajak 2002, 431–46. *Sibylline Oracles*: Parke and McGing 1988, 145–47.

answer: Virgil knew a prophecy by the Sibyl of Cumae, and said so in the line “the final age of the Cumaean song is coming.” Augustine observed that he would not have thought the Sibyl spoke truth, but “a famous Roman poet” shows that she did. He concluded that the prophets of the Scriptures always spoke truth, but there were other prophets who sometimes did.²² In this instance, the prophecies Augustine regarded as true were combined with others he would not have accepted, for Virgil wrote that the cycle of the ages was beginning again, so the voyage of the Argo and the Trojan Wars would recur as the child grew up. But in a letter-exchange with Volusianus, an aristocratic refugee from the sack of Rome, Augustine used the Fourth Eclogue to show that the truth glimpsed by poets and prophets was now accessible to all:

Now we all see what Virgil says: “Assyrian balm is born in common”; and as for help from the grace which is in Christ, he is [the one meant by] “when he leads us, any remaining traces of our crime are annulled, and free the earth from perpetual fear.”²³

Augustine took “Assyrian balm grows everywhere,” that is, an exotic healing plant is now accessible to all, to signify that the knowledge of eternal life, once shared by a privileged few, is now on offer to everyone.

“A GOOD PLACE FOR THE SOUL”: AUGUSTINE’S PARADISE

This interpretation is characteristic of Augustine in that it focuses on knowledge and on the relationship of human beings to God. In his early work *Soliloquia*, Reason asks “What do you want to know?” and he replies “I want to know God and the soul.” Reason responds “Is that all?”²⁴ Paradise, for Augustine, was a good place for the soul. He said this even in *De Genesi ad Litteram*, where he argued that the opening chapters of Genesis can be taken literally and that the first paradise, the Garden of Eden, was a real physical place. Some people, he said, would not accept that paradise was a *locus amoenissimus*, a most delightful place shaded by trees and made fertile by springs, even though they could see every day how plants flourish with God’s unseen help and without human intervention. They wanted to give a moral and spiritual interpretation of its

²² in *ep.Rom.inc.exp.* 3; Lact. *Div. Inst.* 7.24.9–15 also says that Virgil followed Sibylline prophecy. Augustine used Sibylline oracles in *Civ. Dei* 18.23; on Christian use of Sibyls as prophets, see Parke and McGing 1988, 152–73.

²³ *Ep.* 137.12; same quotation in *CD* 10.27 and in several other letters.

²⁴ *Sol.* 1.2.7; Conybeare 2006, 148–52.

trees and rivers.²⁵ Augustine thought that paradise was literally a place with trees, *locus nemorosus*; he did not comment on its resemblance to the landscape of pastoral poetry. By extension, he thought, paradise is every spiritual region where it is good for the soul to be, and also symbolizes paradise to come.²⁶

This focus on God and the soul, rather than on the environment of paradise, helps to explain another aspect of Augustine's reflections. The book of Revelation was included in his canon of Scripture, but he did not use its imagery to describe paradise to come.²⁷ In Augustine's heaven we shall not play the *cithara* or sing in the heavenly choir, for truth is an eloquent singing silence and the *cithara*, with its soundbox at its base, symbolises praise in earthly life.²⁸ In *City of God* Augustine said he had once thought that Revelation 20 meant a millennium of spiritual delight for the saints before the final resurrection; but he always rejected any crude physical interpretation and any precise time, and he preferred to interpret Revelation in relation to the present life of the church.²⁹ In an Easter sermon delivered "when the pagans came in," he said that most people make the mistake of imagining paradise as an enhanced version of what they know:

So when we have been told that we will be in Paradise, we think of a pleasant garden [*hortum amoenum*]. And if we think of one bigger than we are used to, we are still enlarging the same kind of thing. If, for example, we are used to seeing small trees, we think of them big, and if we are used to one or another kind of fruit or crop, we think of them enlarged. If we are used to seeing meadows of some size, we imagine them immense and without limit: but we are still enlarging by thought what we know by sight. And when we hear "God dwells in light inaccessible" (1 Tim. 6.16), we measure it by the light we know with our bodily eyes and increase it immensely, but still by enlarging that which we know, whereas that light is of a quite different kind: it is the light of minds, not of eyes.³⁰

This habit of imagining what we know prompted literal-minded, sometimes mocking, questions about life in the resurrection, and Augustine dealt with them patiently in the last book of *City of God*. Yes, everything wrong with our bodies will be put right; we shall even be the right weight. Yes, women will be women, because femaleness is not a defect, God invented it. No, there will not be marriage, because we shall be like the angels, and Jesus said that there is no marriage in heaven.³¹ Many people

²⁵ *Gen. Litt.* 8.1.4; also *Civ. Dei* 13.21; *Civ. Dei* 14.11 reaffirms that paradise is physical and spiritual, enjoyed by the internal and the external senses.

²⁶ *Gen. Litt.* 12.34.65. ²⁷ Harvey 1999.

²⁸ Singing silence, *lib. arb.* 2.13.35; Clark 2010b.

²⁹ *Civ. Dei* 20.7; for an overview of Augustine's thinking, see Daley 2003, 131–50.

³⁰ *Ser.* 360B3, *cum pagani ingrederentur* according to the heading: text in Dolbeau 1996, 59.

³¹ *Civ. Dei* 22.12–20.

in Augustine's time interpreted the angelic life simply as "no sex," but he wanted them to think further about life as angels live it. Angels are spiritual beings who have not fallen away from God. In the life we shall come to share with them, the resurrection body, which is a spiritual body, is perfectly responsive to reason. There is no problem of communication, because we shall simply see each other and, somehow, God. There is no difficulty in doing God's will, no fear of losing blessedness by sin, and no desire because nothing is lacking. In the Garden of Eden, in paradise before sin, bodies were not yet spiritual, but there was no cold or heat or hunger or thirst or illness or old age; sin was possible but was serenely avoided; there was no fear and no desire, but there was joy in love for each other and for God; and they were not bored by leisure.³²

"What is there in heaven for me?" Augustine's answer to this question from the Psalms was "Incorruption, eternity, immortality, no pain, no fear, no end to blessedness."³³ When people asked what we shall *do* in heaven, Augustine's answer was also in the words of a Psalm, *vacate et videte quoniam ego sum Deus* (Ps. 46.11), almost "relax and see that I am God": we shall not be distracted by life in time and by fear and desire, but shall see God in all God's works, and our response will be unending praise. He reflected at length on the "beatific vision," that is, the seeing by which we are made blessed: especially in the last book of *De Genesi ad Litteram*, a detailed discussion of Paul's being caught up into the third heaven and into paradise, and in the final book of *De Civitate Dei*, which he thought was his best attempt.³⁴ (The earliest known commentary on *City of God* was disrupted by a difference of opinion on the beatific vision, when Thomas Walleys, who had better classical resources than his predecessor Nicolas Trevet, was imprisoned on the orders of Pope John XXII.) But though Augustine found it fascinating to consider how exactly we shall see God, what mattered to him was that we shall see and know.

VIRGIL'S VISION

Virgil shared the dream of paradise as a green and peaceful place: did he share the hope of seeing and knowing God? Not in his vision of the past Golden Age under Saturn or of the future Golden Age under Augustus; not in the earthly paradise of the Fourth Eclogue, complete with red and gold sheep, where people will no longer be alienated from the gods by the

³² *Civ. Dei* 13.20 on the body in paradise; 14.10 and 14.26 on life in paradise, ending *non lassitudo fatigabat otiosum*.

³³ *Ser.* 301.9.8; *Ps.* 72: 25. ³⁴ *Retr* 2. 41; McGinn 2007.

crimes of civil war.³⁵ Virgil did not consider knowledge of God even when he wrote about the Elysian fields, where the souls of the blessed live on after death in a pastoral setting like the Golden Age, with trees and grass and streams and sunlight and song.³⁶ Souls are in Elysium by their own merits, which Virgil briefly characterizes as achievements in war and politics and the arts. Teachers could, of course, remind their students that such achievements depend on virtue, that the moral and political virtues (courage, justice, self-control, and practical wisdom) purify the soul, and that intellectual virtue, through the liberal arts, brings understanding of human life and of the universe.³⁷ Did Augustine think about this when studying and teaching Virgil, and did he allow for it when challenging Virgil?

One line in Virgil's list of achievements highlights the difference between Augustine and his pagan contemporaries. Elysium also holds those "who made others mindful of them by their merits," *quique sui memores alios fecere merendo*. Servius interpreted this as the exchange of *beneficia* among people; Augustine thought of the intercession of the saints, which might benefit sinners who had given in charity.³⁸ He remarked:

I am always surprised to find in Virgil too the thought of the Lord when he says "Make yourselves friends from the mammon of unrighteousness, so that they may receive you into the eternal dwellings," and the very similar "Who receives a prophet in the prophet's name shall receive the reward of the prophet, and who receives the righteous man in the name of the righteous shall receive the reward of the righteous." For when that poet described the Elysian fields, where they think the souls of the blessed dwell, he not only put there those who had been able to reach that place by their own merits, but he added "and those who made others mindful of them by deserving," that is, those who had deserved well of others, and by deserving well had made them mindful of them. It is just as if they said to them, in words often used by Christians when they humbly commend themselves to a saint and say "Be mindful of me," and make this possible by deserving well.³⁹

Augustine does not compare the merits of Virgil's blessed souls with the merits of a faithful Christian. Nor does he make a connection, as Macrobius did, with Cicero's "Dream of Scipio," which promises a blessed life in heaven to those who have helped their country.⁴⁰ But Cicero could

³⁵ Removal of sin in the restored Golden Age: Wallace-Hadrill 1982.

³⁶ *Aen.* 6.638–41, 656–59, 673–75. ³⁷ O'Meara 2003, 40–49.

³⁸ *Ser. Aen.* 6.664; *Aug. Civ. Dei* 21.27.

³⁹ *Civ. Dei* 21.27, citing Lk 16: 9 and Mt 10: 41. Courcelle 1984, 470 observes "Exégèse inattendue, certes."

⁴⁰ McCormack 1998, 217–18.

help to answer the vital question which Virgil, according to Augustine, leaves unanswered.

Aeneas asks this question when he meets his father Anchises in a secluded grove where the sounds of the forest are heard, the river Lethe glides past, and souls cluster like bees around meadow flowers.⁴¹ Anchises explains, "These souls, to which by fate another body is owed, drink from the river of Lethe a draught that removes care and gives long-lasting forgetfulness," and Aeneas replies: "Father, are we to think that lofty souls go hence to heaven, and come back again to bodies that slow them down? What dire desire for light do these wretches have?"⁴² *Quae lucis miseris tam dira cupido?* is one of Augustine's most-quoted lines of Virgil. Roman religion, in his view, was limited to this world: myths and rituals were crudely sexual, and even Varro's philosophical interpretation was in terms of natural process and reproduction. Virgil wrote: "Jupiter descends to the lap of his happy spouse," and Servius explained in his commentary that the Stoics say deities are of double sex, male when acting and female when acted on.⁴³ Even in Elysium there is concern for this world. Purified souls may ascend to heaven, but they are in Elysium because they will return to bodies; and yet Virgil, like Plato, thinks that bodies are the source of damaging emotions.⁴⁴ So Virgil's blessed souls, according to Augustine, are not truly blessed, for either they know that their happiness will not last, or their happiness depends on ignorance.

Virgil was so well known that Augustine could use him in a sermon, even though he could not in preaching assume an educated audience who had all read Virgil at school:

One of their authors shuddered: one to whom there was shown, or who himself introduced, a father showing his son in the underworld. Almost all of you know this, though I wish few of you knew. A few know from books, and many from the theatre, how Aeneas went down to the underworld, and his father showed him the souls of great Romans who were to come to bodies. Aeneas was horrified, and said "Father, are we to think that lofty souls go from here to heaven, and come back again to slow bodies?" Are we to believe, he says, that they go to heaven and come back? "What dire desire for light do these wretches have?"⁴⁵

Virgil simply asked the question; Augustine imported "shuddered" from eight lines earlier, when Aeneas first sees the souls. Anchises' answer sets

⁴¹ *Aen.* 6.679–80, 703–09.

⁴² *Aen.* 6.719–21.

⁴³ Virgil, *G.* 2.326, *coniugis in gremium laetae descendit*, cited *Civ. Dei* 4.10; *gremium*, conventionally translated "lap," also means "womb" or "female genitalia." Servius on *Aen.* 4.638.

⁴⁴ *Aen.* 6.734, cited Aug. *Civ. Dei* 14.3. ⁴⁵ *Ser.* 241.5.

out a world-view. Spirit moves within everything; living creatures have fiery energy and their seeds have an origin in heaven, insofar as harmful bodies do not weigh them down and dull them. It is from the body that they fear and desire, grieve and rejoice. After death souls are punished for, and purified from, the wrongs committed in the body, and some deserve to enter Elysium. Then God calls them to Lethe, the river of forgetting, so that they will begin to want to return to bodies.

PARADISE FOR PAGANS: CICERO AND PLATO

Anchises does not raise the obvious question: why does God do this? Virgil did not say, but, as Augustine knew, Platonist philosophy offered some answers.⁴⁶ Plotinus observed that Plato often sounds negative about the descent of the soul to the body: the soul has lost its wings and fallen; it is chained to the body like a prisoner; it is there by chance, or as punishment, or by its own choice in the lengthy cycles of reincarnation described in the Myth of Er at the end of *Republic*. But Plotinus approved the positive account in the *Timaeus*: souls are sent to the world so that the sensible and intelligible worlds should have the same kinds of beings.⁴⁷ There were also philosophers who thought that some souls would not return to bodies. Porphyry, according to Augustine, said this, and thereby showed that Virgil was wrong.⁴⁸ Cicero, writing his own *Republic* a quarter-century before Virgil began the *Aeneid*, replaced the near-death experience of Plato's unknown Pamphylian soldier Er with the dream of a great Roman statesman. Scipio dreams that his dead grandfather explains the order of the universe, and says that for those who have helped their country, there is a place in heaven where they may enjoy an everlasting blessed existence.⁴⁹

This was no doubt too simple and encouraging for Virgil, but Macrobius invoked Virgil in his commentary on this passage of Scipio's dream, citing *quique sui memores alios fecere merendo* to illustrate his Platonist explanation of the grades of virtue. Humans are social beings; the political or "other-regarding" virtues make people rulers first of themselves, then of the state. These virtues mitigate the passions, on which Macrobius quotes Virgil again: "fear and desire, grief and joy." Above the political virtues are the purifying virtues, then the virtues of the purified mind, then the virtues of Intellect itself. But, Macrobius argues, if the function of virtue is to make people blessed, and there are political virtues, then political virtues

⁴⁶ Servius: MacCormack 1998, III n. 74. Platonists: Sorabji 2004, 262–74.

⁴⁷ Plotinus, *Enn.* 4.8. ⁴⁸ *Civ. Dei* 10.30. ⁴⁹ *Cic. Rep.* 6.13.

make people blessed and Cicero is right that there is a place in heaven for the rulers of states. Such souls easily disengage from the body to return to their home among the stars, because they have never lost contact. Hesiod says that heroes rule in the sky; Virgil as poet locates them in the underworld, where Aeneas can visit them, but as philosopher gives them a sun and stars of their own.⁵⁰

A blessed life as a star in the Milky Way, radiating the pure fire of aether, the highest element, is very different from the pastoral vision of paradise. But it is surely a good place for the soul to be, released from the needs of the body and knowing itself in relation to God. Cicero, like Virgil, was a school classic; his *Republic* was not a school text, but Augustine used it extensively in *City of God*.⁵¹ Yet Augustine never mentioned the concluding vision: did he simply follow his usual policy of selecting from the texts he read the damaging admissions that would make his case? Augustine knew that in Platonist philosophy the political virtues are the first stage in the purification of the soul, but he insisted that Roman statesmen were motivated by pride and concern for fame. He claimed to answer, in books 6–10 of *City of God*, those who said the gods should be worshipped for the sake of eternal life, but he did not seriously engage with them.⁵² He ridiculed Varro's argument that soul permeates the universe, and that the universe, composed of world-soul and ordered body, is literally all there is.⁵³ But he recognized that Platonists presented a more serious challenge. They are the best philosophers; they acknowledge a transcendent God

who made not only this visible world which is often called "heaven and earth," but also every soul there is, and who makes rational and intellectual soul, such as the human soul, blessed by participation in his own immutable and incorporeal light.⁵⁴

Platonists understand that

man is blessed, not in enjoying body or enjoying mind, but in enjoying God; not as mind enjoys body or itself, or as a friend enjoys a friend, but as the eye enjoys light, if there is an analogy here; with God's help I shall make this clear in another place, as best I can. For now, it is enough to say that Plato defined the ultimate good as life in accordance with virtue, and said that this could happen only for one who has knowledge of God and imitates God, and is not blessed for any other reason.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Macr. *In somn. Scip.* 1.8–9. ⁵¹ Atkins 2002, 266–69.

⁵² G. Clark, Introduction to *City of God* book 6, at www.epiphanius.org.

⁵³ Varro: see further Clark 2010a. ⁵⁴ *Civ. Dei* 8.1. ⁵⁵ *Civ. Dei* 8.8; "another place" is 22.29.

This is a prospect of paradise in which the soul sees and knows God. Augustine knew that Porphyry thought it could be a lasting paradise, for the soul can be purified and return to the Father, never again to experience the evils of this world.⁵⁶ Would Augustine find a paradise for pagans if he read Virgil together with Plato, and saw the dire desire of the soul for the light of this world as a stage of its gradual progress towards celestial light, or if he connected the two great classical authors and, like Macrobius, read the vision of Aeneas in relation to the dream of Scipio?

Augustine envisaged a distinctively Christian paradise, a product of the distinctively Christian doctrine of bodily resurrection. He changed his views on the relationship of body and soul, and on the Platonic teaching that soul has fallen into body and wants to escape.⁵⁷ By the time he embarked on *City of God*, he thought that Virgil had, without realizing it, said something true: the soul does desire a body, namely its own body, with which it formed the soul-body complex that is human life. But in the resurrection souls will not experience *dura cupiditas* for return to a body, because they will have with them the bodies to which they want to return, with no risk of losing them.⁵⁸ Virgil was wrong to think that the body is the source of passions that damage the soul: it was the choice of the first humans to do what they wanted, not what God wanted, that disrupted the harmony of soul and body as God created them. The separation of soul from body in death is punishment, not liberation.⁵⁹

For Augustine, Virgil cannot offer paradise, in the Golden Age or in Elysium, because Virgil, like the people whose culture he represents, has not accepted the assurance of a blessed life for body and soul in union with God. He cannot think beyond the temporary joys of an earthly paradise, or of a purified soul that will rise to heaven then once again fall for a material body. Augustine wants a blessed life without end, not a life for an unimaginably long time, or a succession like the succession of leaves on a tree that endures.⁶⁰ For Augustine, paradise is a place, physical or spiritual, where it is good for the soul to be. So the Garden of Eden was paradise before sin; the church is paradise with fruit, symbolized in the Song of Songs;⁶¹ the house of the Lord is paradise;⁶² the bosom of Abraham is paradise, where Lazarus was, bathed in brilliant light; Paul was in paradise,

⁵⁶ *Civ. Dei* 10.30; TeSelle 1974, 134–41.

⁵⁷ Rist 1994, 92–112.

⁵⁸ Soul-body complex, *Civ. Dei* 14.5; soul and resurrection body, *Civ. Dei* 22.26. Sorabji 2006, 304–14 on problems of disembodied survival, and 315 on how resurrection with a body solves some problems.

⁵⁹ *Civ. Dei* 13.6. ⁶⁰ *Civ. Dei* 22.1. ⁶¹ 4.13. ⁶² *Aug. ser.* 366. 8.

in a place both physical and spiritual, when he was caught up into the third heaven.⁶³ Physical paradise also signifies the life of saints now in the church and eternal life to come, just as Jerusalem is both a particular earthly city and our eternal mother in heaven. As so often for Augustine, a text from the Psalms prompts the right words, in a sermon that everyone could understand:

There follows "May I dwell in the house of the Lord for length of days." This house of the Lord is paradise. It is length of days, it is eternal life. You will not be hungry there, or thirsty, you will not labour in the heat of the sun and moon, you will not feel the cold and storms of winter. There is no sadness and grief there. You will always be blessed in the company of the saints. You will rejoice with them, and exult, living and praising God for ever and ever. For it says in another psalm "Blessed are they who dwell in your house: they will praise you for ever and ever." This is the hope of your faith, beloved. You have attained to belief in the Lord: hurry, work hard to achieve by good conduct what you have believed. We are made Christians not for this life, but for the life to come.⁶⁴

⁶³ *Gen. Litt.* 12.34.65. ⁶⁴ *Ser.* 366.8.

CHAPTER 13

Heaven as a political theme in Augustine's City of God

Emile Perreau-Saussine

Augustine's political philosophy is centered around both the presence and the coming of God's kingdom. Augustine defines citizenship in terms of what one loves (*City of God* 14.28). Part of the community of those who love God (the city of God) lives away from the celestial city, among those who love earthly rewards (the earthly city). According to Augustine, the city of God is ultimately the celestial Jerusalem, but it is also found in the love and charity which is displayed here and now, in the earthly city. "The world pursues its course with these [cities] being in some way mixed until their separation at the last judgment."¹ The city of God is sometimes called the heavenly city because its perfect state is achieved only in the afterlife. But insofar as men lead virtuous lives, it already exists here on earth. This raises various questions. How can ordinary politics possibly be related to heaven? Does Augustine think that the politics of a city that lacks any concern for heaven still relates to God's eternal order? And does he think that Christians are bound by political obligations imposed on them by a city that does not see itself as oriented towards salvation and heaven? In this chapter I hope to give a sense of how Augustine reconciles his concern for the highest aims with a prosaically sinful reality; how he brings together the full measure of human greatness with the full measure of human misery.

HEAVEN AS THE END OF POLITICS

During illegal pagan celebrations in Calama, not far from Hippo, a riot had taken place in 408. A church was looted and burned. A semi-pagan, Nectarius, urges Augustine to protect his fellow citizens from legal penalties. Augustine refuses bluntly. He thinks that Nectarius does not quite understand the significance and the usefulness of these penalties.

I would like to thank Margaret Atkins and Gillian Clark for their comments on a draft of this essay. This article is dedicated to Margaret Atkins.

¹ Augustine: *A Litteral Commentary on Genesis*, 11.20.

Nectarius lacks the right perspective. Full understanding, to the extent to which it is possible on earth, among sinful human beings, requires a consideration of the proper temporal horizon. In his letter, Augustine repeats twice: “look ahead,” that is, to the eternal life. Nectarius does not see the full picture. The only city he sees is the city of man, the city here and now. He does not take into account what he needs to take into account: heaven and hell. It is only with this in perspective that one can act rationally. Nectarius is asking for forgiveness because he can only see the city here and now. Augustine is more inclined to be hard because he thinks that it might help souls on their way to eternal happiness. “We are begging for them to avoid far more serious harm, and to win greater goods.” A proper, balanced understanding of what is good for humans cannot stop with physical death.

Death is the end of evils, but for those only whose lives were chaste, devout, faithful, and innocent; not for those who are inflamed by desires for the trifles and vanities of this temporal life.²

In his letter to Nectarius, Augustine’s tone is consciously hard. He is not keen to be as appeasing as Nectarius, whose “leniency is destructive.”³ Mercy can be a vice. Augustine emphasizes that true care is demanding. Christian gentleness does not exclude harshness. One might have to hurt out of love – as with amputations. Augustine speaks with authority and with the good of everyone at heart, even if it means displeasing and punishing.⁴ He speaks like a judge, because justice is at stake, and one cannot understand properly the demands of justice without taking into account eternal life.

Understanding is needed of what leads to heaven. To the extent that Nectarius does take into account the long view, he needs to have the right one. A vague idea of eternity for the do-gooders will not do.

The fact that you said that “all laws aim, by various paths and ways, at the heavenly homeland” makes me nervous that you might be rather slow to grasp the only path that leads to it, if you think that the one on which you are established at present is going in that direction.

Not *any* consideration of future life will do. It is not enough to have a temporal horizon which includes heaven. It has to be the Christian understanding of heaven.

² Augustine: letter 104, in Dodaro and Atkins 2001, 12. Cf. Atkins 2002.

³ The quotations are from Augustine, letter 104 (Dodaro and Atkins 2001, 14–18).

⁴ Clark 2007.

From the Christian point of view, non-believers are like children, whose wishes should not be taken too seriously.

On the whole, we would tend to help most by not giving what they want, and to do harm by giving it. Hence the saying, "Don't give a boy a sword."

Augustine contrasts subjective desires with objective interests and needs.

Look ahead a little to the future. Have the sense to concentrate on the real interests of your petitioners rather than their desires. Surely we cannot be held to love them faithfully if our only concern is to stop their love for us being weakened because we fail to achieve their demands. In that case where would the man be who is praised in your literature as "ruler of his homeland," who pays attention to his people's interests rather than their wishes?

People's subjective "wishes," if they are entrapped in the present, should be subordinated to their objective needs and "interests," that include the right understanding of life eternal. Adults can be like children, who only think about immediate gratification without the maturity that true belief gives.

Augustine seems to offer here the lineaments of a Christian political philosophy. Political life on earth should be subordinated to the eternal life promised in Scripture. This is the theme Augustine develops a few years later in the *City of God*. As its title suggests, the book argues, in line with his letters to Nectarius, that what matters ultimately is not the earthly city but the divine city. Christians thinking about politics must consider the final end: the eternal kingdom of God. Christians should make sure that life here and now becomes an image or a sign of the life in heaven. The *civitas Dei* includes both heaven and the living faithful. The purpose of Augustine's political science is to invite everyone to participate concretely in this city of God, in order to manifest on earth, in time, the presence of the eternal, transcendent heaven. Ordinary time is dispersal, loss of unity, whereas eternity is gathered time.

For Nectarius, Augustine is more reminiscent of Cicero than of Socrates:

I read the letter sent by your distinguished self, with its assault on the worship of idols and the temple rituals. While doing so, I did not seem to be hearing the voice of the well-known philosopher who, they tell us, used to sit on the ground in some dark corner in the Academy's lyceum sunk in some deep thought, with his head bent and his knees drawn up to his forehead [...] No – instead the *consularis* Marcus Tullius Cicero was summoned by your eloquence and stood before my eyes.⁵

Nectarius is trying to be flattering. But it might have been more sensible to appeal instead to the meditative and somewhat undecided side of

⁵ Nectarius to Augustine: letter 103, in Dodaro and Atkins 2001, p. 8. The allusion to the Lyceum points to Aristotle, but the philosopher sitting on the ground is more likely to be Socrates.

Socrates against Cicero the imperious advocate and confident consul. By appealing to the example of Socrates, and to a kind of reflective skepticism of a higher dignity, Nectarius would have set the philosophical figure *against* the political one. He could have pointed to Socrates' limited expectations for the city – the city as a cave, an obscure and messy place of unbridled passions, where people tend to behave like nasty little (or not so little) tyrants. Nectarius could have referred not to an idealist Socrates, but to a Socrates tentative about whether his very real ambitions for moral philosophy could be realised.

Augustine develops a subtle dialectic, meant to articulate two dimensions. On the one hand, God already reigns in the world, Christ is king. God's kingdom is already here.⁶ Heaven is *outside* time and, as such, ever present, more truly present than anything else in the charity displayed by humans on earth. On the other hand, heaven is *at the end* of times, and therefore presently absent. Believers pray the "Our Father" asking "Thy kingdom come." God's reign is not yet perfect. Christ's enemies are defeated, but they still fight, they have not accepted their defeat. The rebellion has not quite ended. Humans are torn between "the love of God to the contempt of oneself" and "the love of oneself to the contempt of God" (14.28).

The more Augustine analyses the presence of the city of God here and now, the more carefully he has to account for resistance to God. The higher Augustine sets his gaze, the more he needs to keep an eye on how low political life can be – how base the earthly city is, how awful human societies are in some respects. The more Augustine infers a specific set of policies from an idea of heaven, the more he needs to relate these sets of policies to the overwhelming reality of evil.

Augustine's answer to Nectarius shows that he was clearly hoping that a policy putting heaven to the fore could lead to some tangible and good results – not least, the conversion of the heathens. However, in the wake of the Sack of Rome (410), and as he came to write the *City of God* (413–425), Augustine seems to have become more tentative about whether his ambitions could be realized, entertaining a darker view of earthly politics.⁷ He ends up writing that the kind of political authority under which human beings live does not matter "as long as those who give orders do not constrain them to act in an impious or unjust way."⁸ In other words, the state can be legitimate even if those who give orders are not aiming at bringing citizens to heaven. Augustine comes close to emphasizing a negative

⁶ Contrast Mat. 12.28 and 11.5; 1 Cor. 15.20–28. Cf. Cullmann 1964, 1971; Sanders 1985, 123–56; O'Donovan 1996.

⁷ Markus 1970, 30–44. ⁸ Augustine: *City of God*, 5.17.

freedom from which Christians should benefit rather than the hope of bringing about a fully Christian society here and now. The overwhelming presence of sin in the world makes it reasonable to expect on earth at most a very provisional order, and certainly not one ordered to eternal life. A brief comparison of Augustine with Eusebius should illustrate this point.

In Constantine's reign, Eusebius finds more than an echo of the future: a foretaste of the eternal Kingdom, a realized eschatology. God "gives the pledge and first fruits of future rewards even here, assuring in some sense immortal hopes to mortal eyes."⁹ For Eusebius, the Roman Empire has to be understood as instrumental in the spreading of the gospel since, by the divine plan of history, the incarnation coincided with the beginning of the *Pax Augusta*. Christ's monarchy and Augustus' monarchy sustain one another. Similarly, Constantine's monarchy is bringing God's kingdom to earth. Throughout Eusebius' panegyric, Constantine is compared to Christ. His earthly empire replicates the heavenly kingdom. The monotheism of the heavenly kingdom is reflected in the monarchical empire, and Constantine models himself on a divine exemplar. His role is that of a savior, to prepare humanity for the kingdom of God.¹⁰

Augustine was initially attracted to the idea of a fully Christianized empire under Theodosius, but had retreated from it by the time he came to write the *City of God*. Augustine never identifies the Church with the Roman Empire. In the *City of God*, he hardly ever mentions Constantine. For him, the conversion of Constantine has not fundamentally transformed the nature of the Roman Empire. The "Constantinian era" has not brought a revolution in the economy of salvation. The earthly "success" of the visible Church cannot be assimilated unambiguously to a victory for the city of God. The city of God is not coextensive with the institutional and empirical reality of the Church here and now. Christians are sinners, and some citizens of the city of God do not yet belong formally to the institutional Church (I, 35). The boundary between the earthly city and the city of God is neither a sociological nor a historical one: it is in everyone's heart.

POLITICS WITHOUT CONCERN FOR HEAVEN

Augustine uses two definitions of a city. Famously, he asserts in accord with the first that "there never was a Roman Commonwealth" (2.21 and 19.21). Rome was never the property of the people (a *res publica*). Indeed,

⁹ Eusebius: *Life of Constantine*, 1.3.

¹⁰ Eusebius: *Panegyric to Constantine*, 3, 16, and *Life of Constantine*, 1.5, 24; 2.19.

if one means by “people” a multitude united in common agreement as to what is right, there never was a Roman *people*. The Romans could behave in an impressive way, but there was something deeply unsatisfactory even in their greatest deeds: they were directed towards Rome’s earthly glory, and not towards eternal life. The Romans had accumulated much more treasure on earth than in heaven – “they already have their reward” (5.15). From a Christian point of view, pagan virtue is not true virtue, because it is not oriented towards the true end, which is the contemplation of God. Without humility, virtue is not quite virtue (19.25), nor can justice without a Christian perspective be true justice, because such a justice presupposes that one renders to God what belongs to God (19.21) – justice is giving each his due.

However, Augustine offers another definition of a people, a less demanding one: as an assembled multitude “bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love” (19.24). According to this definition, the Roman people are indeed a people, even if the object of their love was their own glory and not God’s glory. Similarly, Athenians, Egyptians and many others formed “peoples” in that second sense. Augustine seems suddenly quite far away from his letter to Nectarius. Naturally, he is not denying the importance of heaven as the right ultimate political perspective. But, out of realism, he is recognizing that this is precisely the *ultimate* political perspective, one that societies can ignore without immediately collapsing. Even if a city has no concern for the truth about God and eternal life, it can be a city worthy of that name. There is nothing inherently contradictory or impossible about a city which would care *only* about earthly survival, money, power, and pagan fame. A city without any obvious concern for heaven can still remain a city.

The earthly city, characterized by its exclusive love for earthly things, is still a “city.” The pagan solution, materialistic, ruling out as irrelevant all interests that look beyond, is not a very satisfactory solution; but it is a practical possibility. Augustine acknowledges that civic virtue does not necessarily require revelation: “God revealed in the wealth and the fame of the Roman empire how powerful are civic virtues even without true religion.”¹¹ Here, Augustine is at his most anti-idealist. Some societies are not aspiring to anything grand or lofty. Behind its own grand appearances, Rome was often not much more than a “band of robbers” (4.4). Augustine is under no illusion about how bad, and how low human organizations can be, while remaining “organizations” at some level. There is a kind of

¹¹ Augustine: letter 138, Dodaro and Atkins, 2001, 41.

commonwealth even in a robber band – “honor among thieves,” one might say. There must be rules for the division of the spoil. There must be within them a relative and internal justice, even though in regard to the world at large, they are outlaws. Any association, if permanent, must have within it some justice. States cannot be entirely without justice, or there would be no society at all. In order to be states, states have to keep internal peace, and that requires a minimum of justice. “The earthly city, which does not live by faith, desires an earthly peace, and it establishes an ordered concord of civic obedience and rule in order to secure a kind of cooperation of men’s wills for the sake of attaining the things which belong to this mortal life” (19.17). That cooperation is limited, insufficient, but still very real.

How do Augustine’s two definitions of a “people” relate to one another? A possible interpretation would be that, with the second definition, Augustine is breaking with Plato and Cicero. He is pointing towards Hobbes: *auctoritas non veritas facit legem*. He is offering what would be described today as a positivist definition of justice. A people can be a people even if it does not take into account true justice, *vera justitia*. An interpretation more in tune with the spirit of Augustine’s work does emphasize the continuity between the first and the second definition of a “people.” Both point towards the unifying power of love and peace, whether perfect or imperfect. There is a justice in the earthly city, but an imperfect justice, which only comes fully to its own in the city of God. The difference between the two definitions is a matter of degree, not of nature.¹²

The people in the second sense are the people of the earthly city, seeking something unsatisfactory, but nevertheless important: an earthly peace that the city of God needs.

So long as it lives like a captive and a stranger in the earthly city ... it makes no scruple to obey the laws of the earthly city, whereby the things necessary for the maintenance of this mortal life are administered; and thus, as this life is common to both cities, so there is a harmony between them in regard to what belongs to it. (19.17)

The earthly city is not only the wretched city, the sinful city. It is also a city which pursues a good: the “maintenance of this mortal life.” The eternal city has to “obey the laws of the earthly city” to the extent that the earthly city pursues a good end, an end it has in common with the city of God. Even among the worst peoples, there is a kind of order, an order that enables them to form a “people.”

¹² Figgis 1921, 59–67; Deane 1963, 118–29; Adams 1971, 123–35. See also Carlyle 1923. Cf. Plato: *Republic* 5, 462b.

The reason Augustine feels in a position to offer the less demanding idea of a people as “bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love” is given a couple of pages before, in the same book 19. “There cannot exist a nature in which there is no good” (19.13). According to Augustine, even a kind of monster, an unsociable, cruel, and wicked man, who gives nothing to anyone and takes whatever he wants from anyone he can and whenever he can, “wishes for nothing other than a peace in which no one can molest him, and a rest which no man’s violence, or the fear of it, should disturb.” Pride “hates the just peace of God, and it loves its own unjust peace; but it cannot help loving peace of some kind or other. For no vice is so entirely contrary to nature as to destroy even the last vestiges of nature” (19.12). War itself is for the sake of peace and, as we have seen, even thieves need to recognize some rules.

There are two incompatible reasons why one can emphasize the existence of such a minimal order: to argue that religion needs to be subordinated to politics or, alternatively, to argue that politics needs to be subordinated to revelation.

I shall begin with the first reason. If one assumes that human beings cannot hope for anything more than such a minimal order, one should prevent them from struggling for a better order, for fear that this struggle would undermine the existing order (by causing religious persecution or wars of religion). This line of thought, which has been explored by Machiavelli, Hobbes, and their disciples, tends to lead to the subordination of the high expectations of religion (the salvation of the soul) to the lower expectations of politics (the protection of the body). Religion ought to be tamed, its teachings not contradicting the basic demands of the minimal order of which society is capable. As much as possible, religion should be dealt with as a civil religion, which backs the existing order, gives it more solidity and legitimacy, and should not threaten it or undermine it.

There is another reason why one can emphasize the existence of such a minimal order, one more congenial to Christian believers in general, and to Augustine in particular. Augustine does not emphasize the baseness of the earthly city to remind us that it offers at least something like an “order,” but to argue that we are called to a higher order. Far from treating the true religion as a civil religion, one should understand that Christianity cannot be reduced to a civil religion (books 6–8). The earthly city would in fact benefit enormously from attempting to become part and parcel of the city of God. Augustine describes the misery of human beings without God to extol the happiness of human beings in God. For him, that misery is very real, but not less real than the real peace that God has promised in his Gospels.

In the chapters 11 to 20 of book 19, Augustine describes the kind of temporal peace which is sought by the earthly city. This temporal peace, which is so disappointing, reflects nevertheless the divine peace. The minimum order to be found in any society that is not plunging into civil war points towards a higher order. To put it in non-Augustinian terms: the minimal order of natural law points to divine law. Even the devil, who has not "remained in the tranquillity of order, has not thereby avoided the power of the Ordainer" (19.13). The best way to account for the limited natural order is by reference to God's providence, who provides even for those who reject him. The more one deepens the demands of the *pax temporalis*, the more one is led towards a more divine peace.

The limited temporal peace which can be achieved even on the basis of selfishness is not entirely foreign to the real peace which God promises. On a scale which goes from the chaos of civil war to the peace of the heart, the *pax temporalis* is somewhere low, but important, and the city of God has to use it for its own purposes.

The heavenly city makes use of earthly peace during her pilgrimage, and desires and maintains the co-operation of men's wills in attaining those things which belong to the moral nature of man, in so far as this may be allowed without prejudice to true godliness and religion. Indeed, she directs that earthly peace towards heavenly peace: towards the peace which is so truly such that only it can really be held to be peace. (19.17)

This passage makes it clear that there is a continuity between the two kinds of peace and that there is an element of morality involved even in the *pax temporalis*. Citizenship in the city of God does not abrogate but preserves and complements citizenship in a temporal city. The city of God does not replace the earthly city but supplements it by providing the means of achieving its own true goals as well as higher goals. This passage also makes it clear that the *pax temporalis* has to be subordinated to a more ultimate peace, where and when appropriate. Cooperation is moral as long as it does not "prejudice true godliness and religion."

Augustine acknowledges the existence of the *pax temporalis*, but not as a redeeming dimension of the earthly city. Augustine is not imagining a third city, which would be somewhere between the earthly City and the city of God, a secular "city of Man," which would be genuinely good in a sense (bringing some sort of peace), while not specifically meaningful from a Christian perspective (unlike the city of God). For Augustine, there are indeed some good elements in the earthly city: some elements of peace provided by God. But these elements are badly used. They are only properly used in the city of God, that is, with love, and for the service of

God.¹³ There are no aspects of social and political life that are morally or spiritually indifferent.

Augustine does not believe that societies are all equally un-Christian, equally far away from heaven. He is not opposed to the notion of a Christian culture, that is, of a historical, concrete, recognizable incarnation of the true Church in a transient world. To some extent Augustine identifies the visible Church, in its sacramental reality, with the city of God.¹⁴ If the city of God cannot be precisely identified with the "visible" Church, it cannot be separated from it either. At times, Augustine talks about the city of God as the Church in the sense of a visible comprehensible body, hierarchically organized. The Kingdom of God is not a mere hope but a present reality, not a mere name for a divine idea, but an institution, duly organized among men, subsisting from one generation to another. That is why Augustine's call to bring about the city of God here and now is not an "idealistic" call but a practical one. The perspective of heaven should regulate and orient practical reason.

THE END OF POLITICAL HISTORY

A political philosophy that brings heaven to the fore might be described as "utopian." But this would only be the case if Augustine could be accused either of underestimating the importance of evil in human life, or of conflating time and eternity. Augustine does neither.¹⁵ Not usually accused of being insufficiently sensitive to the importance of the fall, Augustine describes sin as omnipresent, even in the institutional Church, which cannot be identified with the city of God. The punishment for disobedience to God is the disobedience of the human body to the mind (14.15). Besides, although Augustine is keen to relate time to eternity, he never collapses the two into one another. Heaven is at the end of times, after the last judgment. We live in time, in this world. Augustine argues both that the realization of history is after history itself and that it is not entirely external to history. History does not receive its final meaning from itself but it has a meaning.

Augustine carefully separates secular history from the sacred history narrated in holy books by writers inspired by God. He has no sympathy

¹³ Cf. Cranz 1950; Marrou 1957; Manent 1998.

¹⁴ Cf. Congar 1957. Augustine takes little interest in hierarchical topics: he does not develop the theory of the episcopate in the way in which Cyprian did. When he thinks of the Church it is of the whole body of the faithful.

¹⁵ Fortin 1996.

for attempts to interpret Rome's history in prophetic terms or categories. Even if it no longer outwardly persecutes the true believers, and even if it does from time to time compel unbelievers to enter the true Church, the Empire remains sinful and disordered. The eschatological dimension of God's kingdom cannot be absorbed in the realization of a Christian Empire.¹⁶ Communities are formed by sinners: earthly peace is fragile because there is no true *concordia*. Human happiness here and now is mixed with fear. Societies want peace but mostly on their own terms.

In contrast with Eusebius, who thinks that the more people accept the spiritual truth, the more material benefit would befall mankind as a whole, Augustine is skeptical about such correlations. Virtue and good deeds will not necessarily receive earthly rewards. In God's eyes, neither the good nor the bad things of this world are of any real significance and value. God "bestows them on both good and bad men . . . according to an order of things and times which is hidden from us but thoroughly known to Himself" (4.33). There is a progress through the gradual revelation of the divine truth, but there is no equivalent progress in material or political matters.¹⁷ Cities and empires rise and fall throughout the course of history. "Because of the mutability of human things, no security will ever be given to any nation to such a degree that it should not have to fear invasions" (17.13).

This critique of Eusebius illustrates the spirit in which Augustine criticizes chiliasm. For Augustine, the *eschaton* is not simply the end of this present age and the beginning of a new one, but the end of history itself, the beginning of the "eternal Sabbath," when God, who is beyond all time and all temporal succession, will "rest in us" (*Confessions*, 13.52). The hope for a better world within history has to be subordinated to the hope for a new heaven and a new earth beyond history.

Augustine expects the coming of Christ as judge, the resurrection of the dead, the burning and renewal of the material world. But he is hesitant to be specific about the details. He is careful not to speculate on the identity of the Antichrist. He is reluctant to identify any of the traditional apocalyptic signs of the end with disasters of contemporary life. In reply to those Christian thinkers who attempt to figure out the exact date of the end of the world and connect the coming of that event with concrete developments and with definite historical incidents like "the fall of Rome," Augustine declares that such a question "is entirely improper" (18.53).¹⁸

¹⁶ Inglebert 1996; Markus 1970, 22–71. ¹⁷ Mommsen 1959.

¹⁸ Augustine is not much more sympathetic to chiliastic hopes than Jesus was towards Qumran's chiliastic policy. See for instance Hengel 1973.

In the *City of God* (20.7), Augustine acknowledges that a moderate spiritual millennialism is a tenable position, and admits that he once held it himself. He goes on, however, to sketch out in detail an anti-chiliasitic interpretation of Revelation 20.1–6.¹⁹ In this version, the “thousand years” of the earthly kingdom stand symbolically for “all the years of the Christian era.” The number “thousand” is used, as “hundred” sometimes is, to refer to a totality, here the total time remaining of the existence of the world; alternatively, it might refer to the present, sixth, millennium. Augustine identifies the kingdom with the present Church: “his saints reign now with [Christ], although certainly in a different way from how they shall reign hereafter” (20.9). The “thrones of judgment” mentioned in Revelation 20.4 are positions of authority in the Church.

According to one commentator, “the key to understanding Augustine’s eschatological hope is to understand the sharp, metaphysically grounded distinction he draws between time and eternity.”²⁰ Augustine sharpens the distinction between the temporal working of God’s saving grace, in any age of human history, and its eschatological fullness in a Sabbath that is utterly beyond time and the world as we know them.²¹ Eschatological hope does not imply in itself the idea of an immanent completion of history. The realization of history is not within history, but outside it. The *consummatio saeculi* will not take place before the end of times. In particular, eschatological hope does not include any necessary progress in human history. Augustine rejects the view that evil will disappear or diminish as time goes on. The divine promise of Christian eschatology does not include an intra-historical victory for the Christian people. After Christ, and until the last days begin with the return of the Lord in glory, history is theologically homogeneous. Throughout the *City of God*, Augustine avoids any simplistic correlation between worldly success and divine providence.

Augustine does not develop an intra-historic view of salvation. But this does not entail quietism. There is *also* a practical imperative to bring about God’s kingdom here and now – to belong to it here and now. The *civitas Dei* remains an indispensable horizon, even in the earthly city. In that sense, Augustine remains faithful to the points he made against Nectarius. The city of God is the community of the worshipers of the true God, and everyone is called now to join this community – the sooner, the better. Augustine develops a theology of Christian discipleship in time. Time can

¹⁹ Augustine is not the first one to offer a non-chiliasitic interpretation of Rev. 20, but his interpretation stands out as one of the most significant. Hill 2001, 2 (n.3), 118, 132–39, 190–92, 196–201.

²⁰ Daley 2003, 131.

²¹ Folliet 1956; Marrou 1950; Daniélou 1953; Bultmann 1957.

only make sense in relation to eternity itself. Human life can fully make sense if it participates actively in the eternal life of the Creator. The realization of history is after history itself, but it is not entirely external to history: it remains the realization of history itself. In that sense, Augustine's eschatology appears to be a way of giving history a meaning. History does not receive its final meaning from itself but it has a meaning, and its content is certainly not morally indifferent. The meaning of history is that history transcends itself. Human longings are only satisfied in the heavenly city. The earthly city is not a self-sufficient totality capable of fulfilling all of one's aspirations: "our heart does not rest until it rests in God" (*Confessions* 1.1). The city of God is not the celestial city of the afterlife. It is not identical with the visible Church, but it is made manifest by the visible Church. It is a city in the world but not of the world. Even "in the hell of this wretched life" (22.22), we need to remember that we are called to "rest and see, see and love, love and praise" (22.30).

CHAPTER 14

Locating paradise

Markus Bockmuehl

COLUMBUS AND THE DECLINE OF PARADISE

In the pleasant early days of August 1498, Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) caught his first glimpse of the South American mainland. On turning from Trinidad, off Northeastern Venezuela, into the Gulf of Paria between the mountainous Venezuelan headland of Marabal and the island of Trinidad, he ran into a mass of fresh water from the mouth of the Orinoco River and was enraptured by the idyllic climate and sights of what faced him there.¹ “Holy Scripture,” he famously recorded in his logbook,

testifies that Our Lord made the earthly Paradise in which he placed the Tree of Life. From it there flowed four main rivers: the Ganges in India, the Tigris and the Euphrates in Asia ... and the Nile, which rises in Ethiopia and flows into the Sea at Alexandria ... I do not hold that the earthly Paradise has the form of a rugged mountain, as it is shown in pictures, but that ... by gradually approaching it one begins, while still at a great distance, to climb towards it ... I do believe, however, that, distant though it is, these waters may flow from there to this place which I have reached ... All this provides great evidence of the earthly Paradise, because the situation agrees with the beliefs of those holy and wise theologians and all the signs concord strongly with this idea.²

Not many years afterwards, Amerigo Vespucci (1454–1512) similarly reported to his sponsor Lorenzo de Medici about his own three-year exploration of the coastlands of Surinam and Brazil: “For myself, I thought I was near the earthly paradise.”³

How could early modern explorers like Columbus or Vespucci pay heed to quaint ideas like a terrestrial Garden of Eden? This was after all the

¹ For a lively, popular account of Columbus’ discovery and his (dismissively treated) views on paradise see e.g. Rushby 2006, 67–78. I am grateful for valuable comments received on this paper from the members of the 2008 Jerusalem symposium on Paradise in Ancient Judaism and Christianity; from Gary A. Anderson; David Lincicum; Grant Macaskill; Luke Tallon; and from other participants in related seminar presentations at the Universities of Oxford and St. Andrews as well as at Asbury Seminary.

² Quoted in Delumeau 1995, 54–55. ³ Quoted in Delumeau 1995, 110.

age of Gutenberg (1400–68), of da Vinci (1452–1519), and Macchiavelli (1469–1527) – not to mention Martin Behaim (1459–1507), the famous Nuremberg cartographer and inventor of numerous navigational aids and of the terrestrial globe.⁴ So why the strange fascination with the location of paradise?

Half a millennium later we may well smile at the enchanting naïveté of Columbus' hyperbolic imagery, even if it is clearly the case that such explorers were of course not *primarily* preoccupied with finding the Garden of Eden. To dismiss their descriptions as naïve, however, would be to miss a neglected and intriguing feature of ancient, medieval, and early modern geography. Until around 1500, when high-quality navigational maps began to be orientated towards true north and to reflect degrees of latitude and longitude, the vast majority of literary and cartographical sources assumed without question that the terrestrial paradise is in a specific location somewhere in the Far Eastern regions of this world – and thus at the top of their world maps. As Alessandro Scafi shows in meticulous detail in his monumental recent study, medieval maps feature a surprisingly constant concern for the specific – and indeed *geographical* – location of paradise.⁵

Standard modernist narratives of scientific ascendancy attribute Eden's topographical demise to the demythologizing effect of the Renaissance. New horizons in astronomy and navigation, in discovery and rediscovery of new worlds around the globe – all this necessitated a more scientific view of the world in which the cosmological conceits and enchantments of a darker age were finally banished from the discourses of reasonable inquiry. And thus too was paradise evacuated from the navigators' charts and maps of destinations that could be more predictably reached by explorers and scheduled merchant navies servicing the ambitions of nascent European empires. The process began in the late Middle Ages, but was significantly accelerated in 1406 by the rediscovery and first Latin translation of the second-century *Geography* of Ptolemy, with its navigationally much more convenient projection and orientation toward the North rather than (as before) toward the East.

Representations of this narrative of decline are varied and prolific, and find expression to this day in a cottage industry of semi-popular and even scholarly writing, in which the narrative of "terrestrial Paradise Lost" is somewhat straightforwardly attributed to the fruit of the scientific and

⁴ NB although without paradise, Behaim's globe still featured "St Brendan's island": cf. Delumeau 1995, 69–70 and Map 12.

⁵ Scafi 2006. In keeping with their easterly orientation, paradise appears on these maps almost always placed at the top.

technological tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Jean Delumeau is perhaps only the most accomplished among a long list of recent authors who could be cited here.⁶ It is often said too that the retention of paradise on *mappae mundi* was simply an uncritical attempt to manipulate the gullible faithful – seeking to adorn unpromising and often threatening material realities with a deceptive flourish of enchantment, like parents determined to keep their offspring guessing about the existence of Santa Claus.

However, for many and perhaps a majority of both Jews and Christians from antiquity until the early modern period, paradise was at least in principle a *real* place somewhere on this earth. Not, to be sure, a location straightforwardly accessible by conventional modes of travel; but on earth nonetheless, and at least in principle reachable. Legends from widely differing centuries affirm that heroic individuals from Seth to Alexander the Great and beyond travelled there.⁷ In that sense the geographic inaccessibility of the earthly paradise is not unlike that of other high mountains and distant islands. *Terra incognita* it may have been, but *terra* nevertheless.

In this study I wish briefly to annotate this point, for both ancient Judaism and Christianity, before proceeding to ask more specifically about *why* such topology of paradise might be thought to persist in texts that seem otherwise perfectly able and willing to distinguish allegory from history or geography, and to recognize which is which in the biblical texts.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF PARADISE IN ANCIENT JUDAISM

At one level, speculation about the physical locality of the original Garden of Eden seems already to be invited by the formative narrative of Genesis 2 itself, where God plants a garden in the East whose waters are said to feed four rivers, at least two of which (the Tigris and Euphrates) were well known to inhabitants of the Middle East. Above all, however, the expression *Gan Eden* eventually comes to point not so much backwards but forwards, to eschatological *Endzeit* rather than protological *Urzeit*; and the place of the latter is of interest chiefly as a clue to the former. Whatever one makes of that particular suggestion, a notable point of reference on

⁶ Delumeau 1995; cf. Bernheim and Stavridès 1999; see further Scafi 2006, 23–27 for a critical history of twentieth-century accounts.

⁷ Cf. Seth in *Life of Adam and Eve* 36–40.

this matter is Joseph Klausner's famous opinion about Israel's "eutopia" as distinctively *eschatological*:

The Messianic expectation is the *Golden Age in the future*. But all the ancient peoples except Israel could tell only of a *Golden Age in the past* . . . The happy state of the first man in the Garden of Eden was so short that it is difficult to call it an "Age."⁸

In fact, of course, even the evidence that Klausner himself surveys suggests a somewhat more complex picture – a point stressed by John Collins and other recent writers.⁹ For one thing, the supposed brevity of the Age of Eden seems rarely to trouble the ancient authors, who in fact take a surprisingly persistent interest in it – and, more to the point for present purposes, in its location. Conversely, Virgil's famous Fourth Eclogue illustrates that a future Golden Age was a possible object of desire even for pagans.

Although Jewish use of the terms *pardes* and *παράδεισος* certainly predates the first century, it is apparently only in the New Testament and in tannaitic literature that paradise comes to denote not merely a garden in general or the biblical Garden of Eden in particular, but a future and possibly celestial abode of the righteous.¹⁰ Four celebrated tannaitic rabbis "entered" it alive,¹¹ as indeed in rabbinic midrash a surprising number of other individuals are said to have done.¹² In at least some texts like these, paradise is conceivably still a terrestrial place, though it is difficult to pin down any concrete geographical location.

The term *Gan Eden* came to designate one of three interrelated and partially overlapping notions in ancient Jewish texts – (1) the biblical Garden of Eden in the Genesis account; (2) a temporary abode of the righteous awaiting the world to come, possibly in a location somewhere on earth; and (3) the eschatological and quite possibly heavenly home of the world to come.

⁸ Klausner 1955, 14–15.

⁹ For a typology of Israel's utopianism see e.g. Collins 2000; cf. also Beavis 2006, 29–52.

¹⁰ Note, however, that *pardes* appears rarely if ever to be used as a "heavenly" place: see Bamberger 2007, 628.

¹¹ *B. Hag.* 14b cf. *y. Hag.* 2.1, 9a: "Four men entered paradise – Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Acher [i.e. Elisha ben Abuya], and Rabbi Akiva. . . Ben Azzai looked and died. . . Ben Zoma looked and went mad. . . Acher destroyed the plants. . . Akiba departed in peace." ת"ר ארבעה נכנסו בפרדס וא"ל . . . בן עזאי הציץ ומת . . . בן זומא הציץ ונפגע . . . אחר קיצץ בנטיעות רבי הן בן עזאי ובן זומא אחר רבי עקיבא. . . בן עזאי הציץ ומת . . . בן זומא הציץ ונפגע . . . אחר קיצץ בנטיעות רבי עקיבא יצא בשלום

¹² Eleven in total according to Ginzberg 1909–38, 5.96, also cited in Bamberger 2007. As early as the *Book of Jubilees*, Enoch is said to be in Eden, a (or the?) Holy of Holies and one of three holy mountains, in the extreme East of the world: *Jub.* 4. 23, 26; 8.16, 19.

Attempting even a thumbnail survey of the enormous range of ancient opinion on this matter cannot be our concern here: in his patchy excursus Paul Billerbeck, for example, took nearly fifty pages of eclectic fine print just to lay out the rabbinic sources supporting various interpretative options.¹³ Suffice it to say that typically at least two of the three categories overlap. In both the late Second Temple and early rabbinic periods, both earthly and heavenly paradise language are amply attested; and it is rarely possible to be certain at what level the language operates. In that sense the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* seems right to assert that “the boundary line between the earthly and heavenly Garden of Eden is barely discernible in rabbinic literature.”¹⁴

Nevertheless, it remains the case that throughout the periods of the Second Temple as well as of normative rabbinic literature one encounters texts in diverse apocalyptic and midrashic genres that unambiguously affirm a terrestrial, and therefore locatable, paradise. Josephus’ report on the Essene view of the afterlife is hardly out of the ordinary, except in his desire to compare it to Greco-Roman ideas, for the benefit of his paymasters (*War* 2.155):

For virtuous souls there is reserved an abode beyond the ocean, a place which is not oppressed by rain or snow or heat, but is refreshed by the ever gentle breath of the west wind coming in from the ocean. . . The Greeks, I imagine, had the same conception when they set apart the isles of the blessed.

At one level one might think it natural that the Garden should be sought in the East. Did not Genesis 2.8 say quite plainly, “And the Lord God planted a garden *in Eden, in the east*, and there he put the man whom he had formed”? A few chapters later we are invited to conceive of Eden as East of Babylon (Gen. 11.2, 9, 9). There seemed to be an invitation to speculate in the combination of the garden in the East and the four great rivers that flow out of it. The *Book of Jubilees* locates a holy, Temple-like Eden in the extreme East of the world at the end of the land of Shem,¹⁵ while the *Life of Adam and Eve* too evidently affirms that paradise “still existed somewhere on the earth, distant and inaccessible but still an object of . . . desire.”¹⁶

Two of the rivers of Genesis were well known to be Mesopotamian. Since at least the late Second Temple period, the other two were typically

¹³ Strack and Billerbeck 1922–61, 4.1118–65. ¹⁴ Anonymous 2007, 389.

¹⁵ *Jub.* 8.16, 21; cf. 3.12; 4.24, 26; 4Q265 7.ii.14; 1 *En.* 32.

¹⁶ Ashton and Whyte 2001, 75 (adding “an object of *nostalgia* and desire”). For the equation of Eden and Temple in *Jubilees*, cf. e.g. van Ruiten 1999; van Ruiten 2000, 86–89 and *passim*; also more broadly Anderson 1989, 129–31, 142–46.

identified with equal if paradoxical confidence as the Nile and the Ganges – an identification confidently made by Josephus, among others.¹⁷ This in turn encouraged explorers, at any rate those of the mind, to imagine the Garden variously in mysterious India or even Africa – where indeed Alexander the Great was, in later rabbinic stories, said to have reached its outer walls and windows.¹⁸

To understand the origin of this belief it is important to recognize that a good deal of Jewish as well as Christian reflection on the whereabouts of this place finds its exegetical stimulus as much outside the book of Genesis as within it. An influential passage in Deutero-Isaiah painted Eden as an idealized “garden of the Lord” (51.3; cf. Gen. 13.10; Ezek. 31.8–9). But the most important biblical text outside Genesis was Ezekiel 28.12–16, which in a complex and problematic oracle¹⁹ addresses the king of Tyre as a quasi-mythological fallen angel:

You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. 13 You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, sardius, topaz, and diamond, beryl, onyx, and jasper, sapphire, emerald, and carbuncle; and crafted in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared. ^[14]You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. ^[15]You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. ^[16]In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.

Certainly the correlation of the garden with Ezekiel’s mountain of God lent itself easily to a view that envisaged a future Eden in the guise of a new Jerusalem (e.g. *Test. Dan* 5.12; Rev. 22.2), or indeed more generally to the link between the Temple or City and the cosmic mountain that was paradise.²⁰ It is also interesting to note the extent to which Ezekiel’s precious stones influence apocalyptic works (incl. Rev. 21.20), while his notion of these stones as “coverings” (מסכתר) may generate rabbinic talk of “canopies” and “chambers” (*Ruth R.* 3.4: גנון, מדור) in the world to come, or for that matter the Johannine notion of “mansions” (μοναί, John 14.2) in the Father’s house.

¹⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 1.38–39.

¹⁸ See e.g. *b. Tam.* 32b, related to an extensive medieval legend cycle on the life of Alexander. For texts see Zacher 1859. Cf. Cary 1956 for the medieval Alexander romance in general. Jewish dimensions are discussed e.g. in Delling 1981, van Bakkum 1995, Bar-Ilan 1995, and Amitay 2006.

¹⁹ Stolz 1995, 709 calls it a defamatory poem (*Schmähgedicht*).

²⁰ This motif is illustrated e.g. in Levenson 1985, 128–35 and Anderson 1988, 192–99 and *passim*; for Eden as Jerusalem see also Stordalen 2008 and cf. more generally Beale 2004.

the two called Pison and Gihon water the eastern parts, especially Gihon, which encompasses the whole land of Ethiopia, and which, they say, reappears in Egypt under the name of Nile. And the other two rivers are manifestly recognisable by us – those called Tigris and Euphrates – for these border on our own regions.²⁵

Ancient Christian views of paradise were in fact many and various, many of them influenced by Jewish traditions of interpretation. Augustine's (354–430) early fifth-century typology is frequently cited as a useful starting point:

I am well aware that many people have written many things about Paradise; but three opinions emerge. The first is advocated by those who want to understand paradise entirely in physical terms; another, by those who take it spiritually; and the third principle is held by those who take paradise in both senses, physical as well as spiritual. To put it briefly, I confess to finding the third principle attractive.²⁶

This position, widely quoted by later writers since at least Thomas Aquinas (*S.T.* I, 102.1), seems almost Anglican in its impeccably inclusive affirmation of mutually contradictory positions. The reality, I suggest, may instead reflect the kind of spin that is equally in the best tradition of Anglicanism: Augustine here contrives a polarity of stereotypes that permits him to emerge as the champion of the *via media*. Contrary to widespread scholarly prejudice, the exclusively spiritual reading in particular turns out to be virtually unattested among the Fathers (even if well attested among Gnostics); and those who are sometimes supposed to hold the purely spiritual or purely physical views may be better accommodated on a spectrum represented under that same hybrid third heading. As for the crassly literalistic eschatologies sometimes attributed by the Fathers to heresiarchs including Cerinthus, it seems at least worth pondering if these accounts may not in some cases represent caricatures of positions more accurately plotted at a point along the *balanced* spectrum of interpretation.²⁷ Augustine's position, in other words, is characteristic

²⁵ Theophilus, *Ad Autol.* 2.24 ὅτι δὲ καὶ ὁ παράδεισος γῆ ἐστὶν καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς πεφύτευται ... τὸ οὖν ἔτι ἐκ τῆς γῆς καὶ κατὰ ἀνατολὰς σαφῶς διδάσκει ἡμᾶς ἡ θεία γραφή τὸν παράδεισον ὑπὸ τοῦτον τὸν οὐρανόν, ὅφ' ὃν καὶ ἀνατολαὶ καὶ γῆ εἰσιν.

²⁶ "Non ignoro de paradiso multos multa dixisse; tres tamen de hac re quasi generales sunt sententiae. Una eorum qui tantummodo corporaliter paradysum intelligi volunt: alia eorum qui spiritualiter tantum; tertia eorum qui utroque modo paradysum accipiunt, alias corporaliter, alias autem spiritualiter. Breviter ergo ut dicam, tertiam mihi fateor placere sententiam." Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, 8.1. For a discussion of development in Augustine's hermeneutics of Genesis prior to *De Genesi ad litteram* (c. 415), see Kim 2006.

²⁷ A more circumscribed point is acknowledged by Maguire 1987, 364: "Those such as Epiphanius who allowed the earthly paradise to be understood only in its literal sense were, in fact, relatively few in number."

of a widespread view in early Christian thought – Lactantius, Ambrose, Basil, and even Cyril of Jerusalem are in their different ways analogous illustrations.²⁸

Three centuries after Augustine, John of Damascus (c. 676–749) offers a somewhat subtler reaffirmation of this same view: he proposes that the leading interpretations of paradise are justified in making it accessible to the senses, to the intellect, or to both:

Some, indeed, have pictured Paradise accessible to the senses (*sensibilem*), others to the mind (*intelligibilem*). But it seems to me that just as man is a creature in whom sense and mind are blended together, so also man's most holy temple combines the properties of sense and mind . . . Thus, to my thinking, the divine Paradise is twofold, and the God-inspired Fathers handed down a true message, whether they taught this doctrine or that.²⁹

In keeping with this balanced view, John in fact has no difficulty in identifying an earthly paradise in terms that remained substantially unchanged for many centuries:

And this is the divine paradise, planted in Eden by the hands of God, a very storehouse of joy and gladness of heart (for “Eden” means luxuriousness). Its site is higher in the East than all the earth: it is temperate and the air that surrounds it is the rarest and purest: evergreen plants are its pride, sweet fragrances abound, it is flooded with light, and in sensuous freshness and beauty it transcends imagination: in truth the place is divine, a suitable home for him who was created in God's image. (2.11)

This is a description that retains key interpretative traditions of biblical themes from Genesis and Ezekiel. In one form or another this had a remarkably wide currency among early Christian writers, including even Ephrem's astonishing view of paradise as a conically shaped mountain whose outskirts encircle land and sea;³⁰ and it would not have seemed alien to Dante, nor indeed to Christopher Columbus.³¹ It is compatible with the

²⁸ Basil is a classic exponent: DE PARADISO, ORATIO III, PG 30:68. Ambrose too belongs here, despite occasional claims to the contrary: cf. e.g. *De Paradiso* 3.14 on the territoriality of the four rivers; Louth 1995, 715 also cites 1.3–4 and 11.50–51. Cf. further Lactantius, *Inst.* 2.13. Cyril of Jerusalem too, despite the generally heavenly focus of his views on paradise, allows that man's earthly existence is “over against” (κατέναντι) paradise and that this is why believers face East for worship: *Cat.* 2.7 (on which see Hellemo 1988, 158–61); *Myst* 1.9 (cf. Louth 1995 cited below, n. 61).

²⁹ *De fide orthodoxa* 2.11 (trans. ANF; ed. Buytaert 1955, 108). Also cited in Holstein 2006, 81.

³⁰ See Anderson 1988, 199–205; Brock 1990a, 52–54 on Ephrem's *Hymns* 1.8–9, 2.6. Rather than locating paradise “outside time and space” (Brock 1990a, 54), however, it seems more accurate to speak of contiguity with time and space.

³¹ A point rightly noted by Grafton 2006 on Scafi 2006. Note also the role and location of paradise on the influential sixth-century cartography of Cosmas Indicopleustes, on which see e.g. Scafi 2006; also Kominko 2006.

medieval maps surveyed by writers like Delumeau and Scafi, but also – and for our purposes more importantly – with the frequent appearance of the four rivers of paradise on the spectacular late antique mosaic maps of Jabaliyah in Gaza (c. 450 CE), Tayyibat al-Imam in central Syria (447 CE), Madaba in Jordan (565 CE) and other places.³²

But what lies behind this perspective? And why should geographically localized understandings of Eden persist in the face of the more flexible and sophisticated hermeneutic of a heavenly paradise which was clearly known to Jewish and Christian writers alike?

PHILO AND ORIGEN AS TEST CASES

On the most popular reading, the Alexandrian philosophers Philo and Origen are at one in regarding the Genesis narrative as self-evidently indicating *not* a geographically literal Garden of Eden but rather a state of the soul.

Philo

We turn first to Philo,³³ and to his famous disclaimer against a literal reading of the Genesis narrative (*Leg.* 1.43–45):

Let not such impiety ever occupy our thoughts as for us to suppose that God cultivates the land and plants paradises . . . for it could not be that he might provide himself with pleasant places of recreation and pastime, or with amusement.
^[44]Let not such fabulous nonsense ever enter our minds; for even the whole world would not be a worthy place or habitation for God, since he is a place to himself . . .
^[45]God therefore sows and implants terrestrial virtue in the human race, being an imitation and representation of the heavenly virtue . . . Now virtue is called a paradise metaphorically, and the appropriate place for the paradise is Eden; and this means luxury: and the most appropriate field for virtue is peace, and ease, and joy; in which real luxury especially consists.³⁴

Analogous sentiments occur repeatedly elsewhere in Philo.³⁵ Quotations like these might seem to speak for themselves: does it not seem obvious that paradise is a cipher that has no concrete place but is exclusively symbolic of virtue and the beatific vision? And yet the fact is that such a

³² See e.g. Maguire 1999 and Maguire 2002, 24–26, 35 on Madaba; Humbert 1999 on Jabaliyah; Zaquq and Piccirillo 1999, 445–46, 452 (and 445 n. 8 for additional sites). For the four rivers in early Christian apocalyptic cf. recently van Ruiten 2007.

³³ For a fuller discussion of the Philonic material see Maren Niehoff in Chapter 3 above.

³⁴ Cf. similarly *Plant.* 32.

³⁵ Cf. e.g. Philo, *Leg.* 1.63–65, 85–87; *Conf.* 61; *Cher.* 12–13; *Post.* 128; *Plant.* 2–40; *Somn.* 2.241–43.

reductive understanding would certainly fail to do justice to this influential writer.

Indeed on closer examination the concern for tangible concreteness is documentable even in Philo (and, as we shall see, in Origen). While Philo does merrily spiritualize about paradise, at certain points it becomes clear that the very validity of his allegory depends on there being a real garden in some sense planted by God.

Thus in *Quaestiones in Genesin* he writes (1.6) that paradise was planted as a way of enabling man to recognize the divinely given outlines of nature and wisdom and thereby to praise the Creator properly. Philo goes on to say (1.7) that God planted the paradise in Eden towards the East because the world's motion begins from the rising of the sun, even if Eden has a symbolic meaning too. And (1.8) the reason God placed the created man in paradise is because a human being is a mixed creature of soul and body, who needed to work by learning and discipline, whereas the person who is truly in God's own image is already a self-taught hearer, and naturally his own master. The trees of the paradise were perpetually green and flourishing and its fruit good, as was in keeping with a divine paradise that does not degenerate but imparts real benefits. In relation to the tree of life in particular (1.10), Philo seems perhaps more reluctant to allow a literal sense. Rehearsing a variety of interpretations he believes that it indicates "the best of all the virtues of man, piety, by which alone the mind attains to immortality." Likewise the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which seems more explicitly allegorical in intent, denotes prudence to distinguish contrasts such as between the good and beautiful or bad and ugly.

Lest anyone be inclined to collapse the whole account into the purely allegorical, however, when it comes to the four rivers Philo finds the infallibility of Scripture to demand the *literal* meaning on which to ground his interpretation. Thus the rivers are in the first place identifiable, physical rivers; and only after acknowledging this are they most profitably understood as moral ciphers:

[12] What is the river that went out from Eden, by which the Paradise is watered; and four rivers separated, the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates (cf. Gen. 2.10)? For the sources of the Tigris and Euphrates are said to arise in the Armenian mountains. And in that place there is no Paradise, nor are there the two other sources of the river. Unless perhaps Paradise is in some distant place far from our inhabited world, and has a river flowing under the earth, which waters many great veins so that these rising send (water) to other recipient veins, and so become diffused. And as these are forced by the rush of water, the force which is in them makes its way out to the surface, both in the Armenian mountains and elsewhere. And these are the supposed sources, or rather the outflowings of

the river; but properly the supposed sources, since divine Scripture, in which the matter of the four rivers is mentioned, is wholly veracious. For the origin is a river and not a source (according to Scripture). Unless perhaps in this passage matters are allegorized and the four rivers are a symbol of four virtues...³⁶

Philo goes on to appeal to the local knowledge of Mesopotamians for a literal description of the Euphrates and Tigris that nevertheless allow for the moral symbolism Philo favors. Finally (1.14), when asking why man was put in charge of both tilling and keeping the garden, Philo finds that the divine planting of paradise ensured that of course it was in reality merely expedient rather than necessary for the Garden to be cultivated and kept:

But although Paradise was not in need of either of these things, nevertheless it was necessary that he who received the supervision and care of it, (that is) the first man, should be, as it were, a law to husbandmen in all things which it is fitting to labour in. Moreover it was proper that as it was full of all things, He should leave to the cultivator the superintendence and the work of caring for it...³⁷

The point seems clear enough, and is reiterated elsewhere in Philo (e.g. *Opif.* 153; *Leg.* 1.85–87).

Philo's seemingly unexpected allowance for the *sensus literalis* of the Genesis account may at one level reflect the tendency of the *Questions on Genesis* to accommodate a broader range of received exegetical opinion, as David Hay has shown.³⁸ At the same time, it does arguably remain consistent with his concern that figural reading should morally and spiritually intensify, rather than subvert, the observance of the Scriptural text – as most famously expressed against the radical allegorizers of Sabbath, festivals and circumcision in *Migr.* 89–93: “just as we take care of the body because it is the abode of the soul, so also must we take care of the laws that are enacted in plain terms: for while they are regarded, those other things also will be

³⁶ QG 1.12 (trans. Marcus, LCL). “Qui fluvius sit, qui ex Adin procedebat, unde paradus irrigatur et quatuor dividuntur flumina, Phison et Gehon et Tigris et Euphrates? (Gen. 2, 10 ss.) Dicuntur Deglathis et Arazaniae (s. Tigridis et Euphratis) fontes exoriri ex montibus Armeniae: ibi vero paradus non est (hodie), neque residui ambo fontes amnis. Ne forte itaque paradus sit in longinquo a nostra habitatione mundi situ, fluviumque habeat sub terra currentem, qui plurimas maximasque irriget venas: ita ut illae consurgentes mittant sese in alias venas recipientes ob vastitatem, et istae gurgitibus fluctuum suppressae sint, unde violentia eis insita urgente superius erumpant tum in montibus Armeniae, cum alibi. Isti sunt ergo fontes putati, fluviorum potius fluxus; vel etiam fontes revera putati, eo quod omnino infallibilis sit scriptura divina denotans rem quatuor fluviorum: initium enim fluvius est, non fons. Verum forte locus ipse allegoriam prodit. Quatuor enim flumina signa sunt quatuor virtutum.”

³⁷ QG 1.14 (trans. Marcus, LCL). “Paradisus autem etsi harum rerum non indigebat, verumtamen oportuit, ut ille qui accepit eius praesidentiam et curam, primus inquam homo, tamquam lex quaedam esset operariis omnium rerum, quicquid operari fas est. Immo conveniens fuit, ut, quammquam omni plenus erat re, relinqueret agricolae curam ac opus diligentiae.”

³⁸ Hay 1991a, 1991b; cf. Hay 1997 on *Migr.* 89–93 (see below).

more clearly understood, of which these laws are the symbols” (93).³⁹ Philo certainly favors figurative over plain readings and despises a narrow literalism either about legal observance or about the Garden. But it is a misleading and reductionistic caricature to conclude that, in the words of one leading exponent, Philo’s hermeneutic “denigrates the literal meaning of the text and consistently subordinates the visible to the invisible.”⁴⁰ *Au contraire*, hermeneutically and theologically Philo has no intention of denying the plain sense of the text altogether. His undoubted preference for allegory notwithstanding, to eliminate the literal is for him to evaporate the moral and spiritual.

Origen

Origen, as we might expect, pretty closely echoes Philo’s reserve about the divine gardener of Genesis supposedly given to strolling about his shady Eastern groves of an evening. We can be sure, he says categorically, “there are no trees in that place which can be perceived with the senses.”⁴¹ In a widely cited passage he also adds a skeptical note of his own about the implausibilities invoked by those who wish to take the days of creation literally:

For who that has understanding will suppose that the first, and second, and third day, and the evening and the morning, existed without a sun, and moon, and stars? And that the first day was, as it were, also without a sky? And who is so foolish as to suppose that God, after the manner of a husbandman, planted a paradise in Eden, towards the east, and placed in it a tree of life, visible and palpable, so that one tasting of the fruit by the bodily teeth obtained life? And again, that one was a partaker of good and evil by masticating what was taken from the tree? And if God is said to walk in the paradise in the evening, and Adam to hide himself under a tree, I do not suppose that any one doubts that these things figuratively indicate certain mysteries, the history having taken place in appearance, and not literally.⁴²

It is hardly surprising if modern interpreters frequently conclude that Origen “denied the physical existence of the earthly paradise, seeing in the

³⁹ *Migr.* 93: ὥσπερ οὖν σώματος, ἐπειδὴ | ψυχῆς ἐστὶν οἶκος, προνοητέον, οὕτω καὶ τῶν ῥητῶν νόμων ἐπιμελητέον· φυλαττομένων γὰρ τούτων ἀριδηνότερον κάκεινα γνωρισθήσεται, ὧν εἰσιν οὗτοι σύμβολα...

⁴⁰ So Barclay 1996, 177.

⁴¹ λέγομεν, ὅτι οὐκ ἐν αἰσθητῇ ξύλῳ ἐν τῷ τόπῳ: *Selecta in Genesim*, PG 12:100.

⁴² *De Principiis* 4.3.1. Τίς γοῦν νοῦν ἔχων οἰήσεται ‘πρώτην καὶ δευτέραν καὶ τρίτην ἡμέραν ἐσπέραν τε καὶ πρωΐαν’ χωρὶς ἡλίου γεγονέναι καὶ σελήνης καὶ ἀστέρων; τὴν δὲ οἰοῖναι πρῶτην καὶ χωρὶς οὐρανοῦ; τίς δ’ οὕτως ἡλίθιος ὥς οἰηθῆναι τρόπον ἀνθρώπου γεωργοῦ τὸν θεὸν ‘πεφυτευκένας παρὰδεισον ἐν Ἑδέμ κατὰ ἀνατολάς’, καὶ ‘ξύλον ζωῆς’ ἐν αὐτῷ πεποικέναι ὁρατὸν καὶ αἰσθητόν, ὥστε διὰ τῶν σωματικῶν ὁδόντων γευσάμενον τοῦ καρποῦ τὸ ζῆν ἀναλαμβάνειν· καὶ ἄλλιν ‘καλοῦ καὶ πονηροῦ’ μετέχειν τινὰ παρὰ τὸ μεμασῆσθαι τὸ ἀπὸ τοῦδε τοῦ ξύλου λαμβανόμενον; ἐὰν δὲ καὶ ‘θεὸς τὸ δεῖλινόν ἐν τῷ παραδείσῳ περιπατεῖν’ λέγεται καὶ ‘ὁ Ἀδάμ ὑπὸ τὸ ξύλον κρύπτεσθαι’, οὐκ οἶμαι διστάξειν τινὰ περὶ τοῦ αὐτὰ τροπικῶς διὰ δοκούσης ἱστορίας καὶ οὐ σωματικῶς γεγεννημένης μηνύειν τινὰ μυστήρια.

biblical account only a tissue of allegories.”⁴³ And it is of course true that Origen’s liberal allegorization of the terrestrial paradise incurred the ire of his Christian critics like Epiphanius who could not bear Origen’s allegorical nonsense about resurrection and paradise alike, since in his view it gravely misrepresented Scripture’s earthly realities as fantastical heavenly ones.⁴⁴ Even John Chrysostom seems exasperated with those whose allegoristic prissiness about biblical imagery causes them to deny that Eden is on earth:

So, I beg you, block your ears against all distractions of that kind, and let us follow the norm of Sacred Scripture. And when, dearly beloved, you hear that “*God planted a garden in Eden in the east*,” take the word “*planted*” in a sense appropriate to God, namely, that he commanded this to happen; and, about the next phrase, believe that a garden came into being, and in that place which is indicated in Scripture. Not to believe in the contents of Sacred Scripture, and introduce instead other views from one’s own reasoning, is in my opinion to bring great peril to those rash enough to attempt it.⁴⁵

Origen certainly feels free to castigate literalists, including those who expect a fleshly resurrection, a restoration of the earthly Jerusalem, and so forth.⁴⁶ In debate with the pagan Celsus he readily resorts to a rigorously allegorical reading of the Genesis account that asserts its meaning to be clearly superior, and yet perhaps in some sense comparable, to pagan myth;⁴⁷ elsewhere he allows for paradise as belonging to “another world” (*ad alium saeculum*).⁴⁸

⁴³ Thus Maguire 2002, 23; cf. Maguire 1987; Scafi 2006, 39; similarly Crouzel and Simonetti 1978, 2.250 n. 43 (“habituellement, Origène allegorise le paradis”), a position for which Grant 1991, 401 rightly chastises him with reference to *Princ.* 2.11.6.

⁴⁴ In his letter to John of Jerusalem (trans. Jerome *Ep.* 51.5, PL 22:522): “Quis autem patienter ferat Origenem lubricis argumentationibus resurrectionem carnis hujus negantem...? Aut quis audiat in tertio coelo donantem nobis Origenem paradisum, et illum quem Scriptura commemorat, de terra ad coelestia transferentem: et omnes arbores quae scribuntur in Genesi, sic allegorice intelligentem: quod scilicet arbores, angelicae Fortitudines sint, cum hoc veritas non recipiat?” Similarly cf. *Ancoratus* 54.2: οὕτως καὶ περὶ παραδείσου πολλοὶ ἀλληγοροῦσιν, ὥς ὁ θεήλατος Ὠριγένης ἠθέλησε φαντασίαν μᾶλλον ἢπερ ἀλήθειαν τῷ βίῳ συνεισενέγκασθαι. καὶ φησιν· οὐκ ἔστι παράδεισος ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς· δῆθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ ῥητοῦ τοῦ παρὰ τοῦ ἁγίου ἀποστόλου εἰρημένον. Also cf. Epiphanius *Panarion* 47 (2.472–73) on the importance of a terrestrial paradise.

⁴⁵ *In Genesim Homiliae* 13.13 MPG 53:108–09 (trans. Hill 1986, 175): Διὸ, παρακαλῶ, πᾶσι τοῖς τοιοῦτοις τὰς ἀκοὰς ἀποτεχνίσαντες, τῷ κανόνι τῆς ἀγίας Γραφῆς κατακολουθήσωμεν. Καὶ ὅταν ἀκούσῃς, ἀγαπητὲ, ὅτι Ἐφύτευσε παράδεισον ὁ Θεὸς ἐν Ἑδὲμ κατὰ ἀνατολὰς, τὸ μὲν, Ἐφύτευσε, θεοπρεπῶς ἐπὶ Θεοῦ νόει, ὅτι προσέταξε, τὸ δὲ ἐξῆς πίστευε, ὅτι καὶ παράδεισος γέγονε, καὶ ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ τόπῳ, ἔνθα καὶ ἡ Γραφὴ ἐπεσημάνετο. Τὸ γὰρ μὴ πιστεύειν τοῖς ἐν τῇ θείᾳ Γραφῇ κειμένοις, ἀλλ’ ἕτερα ἐπισηγάγειν ἐξ οἰκείας διανοίας, πολὺν ἡγοῦμαι κίνδυνον φέρειν τοῖς τοῦτο ποιεῖν τολμῶσι.

⁴⁶ Cf. *De Principiis* 2.11.2.

⁴⁷ *C. Cels.* 4.39–40; cf. 6.33, 49.

⁴⁸ *Hom. in Num.* 26.4.1 (SC 461:246). Origen’s proliferating of additional worlds incurred the ire of Jerome, but may have been more sympathetically received by Augustine: see the discussion in Heidl 1999, 598–99.

That said, and if Rufinus can be trusted on this count, in fact we do find Origen in that *same* treatise on First Principles affirming his belief that what the Scriptures call paradise is a kind of terrestrial school for souls (*auditorio vel schola animarum*) in which the saints departing this life are trained *before* they can ascend to the kingdom of the heavens. This place is for him clearly “situated somewhere on earth” (*in loco aliquo in terra posito*) and has an existence outside the realm of ideas.⁴⁹ Indeed, he says in a decidedly anti-Platonic moment, “far be it from our thoughts to say that this is an incorporeal world, consisting solely in a phantasm of the mind or the uncertainty of thoughts.”⁵⁰ For all the glorious and unique qualities of this transcendent space, Origen regards as “more likely” the view that it subsists nevertheless in some sense within the reality of this world (*intra huius tamen mundi circumscriptionem cohibeatur*) rather than in what post-enlightenment thought might call the imagination.⁵¹

Despite its occasionally mercurial character, then, Origen’s approach in fact turns out to be not a long way removed from the mainstream patristic position, affirmed by Augustine and reiterated *verbatim* by Thomas Aquinas: “Nothing prohibits a spiritual understanding of paradise, so long as one also confirms belief in the reliable truth of the events narrated.”⁵²

⁴⁹ Origen *De Principiis* 2.11.6 (SC 252:408); cf. 2.11.7; 2.3.6 (refuting the Platonic reading of mere *imagines quasdam, quas Graeci ἰδέας nominant*, SC 252:266; for Paul, things presently unseen are not invisible in the sense of incorporeal, SC 252:270). See further *Hom. in Ezech.* 13.2 (SC 352:414, 422–24): the criminal crucified with Jesus really did enter and eat the fruit of paradise. It is ironic that this function was much later usurped in popular piety by the “earthly hell” of medieval Purgatory, whose origin as a place Jacques Le Goff dates to the early thirteenth century. Cf. Delumeau 1995, 37 citing Le Goff 1984; also cf. Kabir 2001, 6. Louth 1995, 714 cites Gregory of Nyssa *in Cant. Prol.* as following Origen’s spiritualizing line, but also detects the literal sense in *Hom. in Cant.* 2. Scafi 2006, 39 finds “no mention, however, in Origen’s writings, of any paradise on earth” – despite conceding (43 n. 37) that this passage does entail an “intermediate” *terrestrial* paradise.

⁵⁰ *De Principiis* 2.3.6 (“quod utique a nostris rationibus alienum est mundum incorporeum dicere, in sola mentis fantasia vel cogitationum lubrico” (SC 252:266)). Also cf. Delumeau 1995, 31 and n. 41.

⁵¹ Caroline Bammel 1989, 73 puts this point a little more cautiously: paradise is for Origen “a place superior to this earth but none the less a place and not simply a spiritual condition” (cf. pp. 63–64 on the historicity of Adam; similarly Rauer 1961, 253). Even in *Contra Celsum* there may be a sense that the primacy of the moral allegory does in fact depend on some sort of validity of the literal text, which must not be mocked and which is not silly, as Celsus supposes. Note esp. 4.39–40; 6.36, 49.

⁵² *Civ. Dei* 13.21: “Unde nonnulli totum ipsum paradisum, ubi primi homines parentes generis humani sanctae scripturae ueritate fuisse narrantur, ad intellegibilia referunt arboresque illas et ligna fructifera in uirtutes uitae moresque conuertunt; tamquam uisibilia et corporalia illa non fuerint, sed intellegibilium significandorum causa eo modo dicta uel scripta sint. Quasi propterea non potuerit esse paradisos corporalis, quia potest etiam spiritalis intellegi . . . Haec et si qua alia commodius dici possunt de intellegendo spiritaliter paradiso nemine prohibente dicantur, dum tamen et illius historiae ueritas fidelissima rerum gestarum narratione commendata credatur.”

CONCLUSION

How then are we to interpret the persistence of the terrestrial alongside a celestial understanding of paradise?

Explanations focusing solely on the advent of modern scientific cartography have come in for severe criticism in recent years, not least under post-modern or revisionist questioning. The chronology of Eden's topographical demise is documented beautifully in the superb work of Alessandro Scafi, who posits its epitaph around 1542 but interestingly also charts its transformation and survival well beyond that point in the most diverse and surprising modern places. He stresses that our supposedly "scientific" mapping

is no longer regarded as a neutral transfer of information from an "objective" reality, but as an act of human imagination that allows the cartographer to disclose, or the map user to discern, patterns in perceived reality. It is the representations that result from the mapping process that constitute human knowledge. So a map of the world with a portrayal of paradise is not necessarily any less objective or more manipulative or more fanciful than a modern map without it. Both deal with areas that cannot possibly be seen in the same way as they are represented.⁵³

In view of this, ancient and medieval maps of the world

were not devotional, pastoral or theological documents, as opposed to our modern scientific representations of the earth, nor were they tools of religious propaganda or sermons in visual form. Rather, they were representations of the world according to a particular conception, one that took into account the scriptural text and the teachings of the Christian faith. Assessed on their own terms, the medieval maps of the world were in fact no less "scientific" than any other type of map.⁵⁴

Leaving aside the strengths and weaknesses of a progressivist narrative, what matters more for our purposes is that Jews and Christians in late antiquity knew perfectly well how to distinguish terrestrial from celestial realities, however differently or vaguely they may in practice have drawn the dividing line between the two. They merely refused to take for granted what the Enlightenment world would refuse to question: the notion that spiritual and terrestrial truth belong in two incompatible spheres, which must be kept separate and not be allowed to "contaminate" each other.

Far from hermeneutically naïve or superstitious, geographical localization of paradise in the ancient Jewish and Christian traditions is suggestive for certain cognate theological commitments they hold in common, and

⁵³ Scafi 2006, 28. ⁵⁴ Scafi 2006, 94.

possibly even of continuing exegetical contact between them.⁵⁵ There are, in other words, good reasons why a localized paradise persists on the mental and physical maps of people who almost invariably knew better than to reduce the location of God's past or future garden of delights to a sextant reading, a set of satellite coordinates. A flatly literal or a purely spiritualizing understanding was ruled out on hermeneutical grounds: continuing belief in an inaccessible and yet terrestrial, mappable paradise was an important part of the acceptance of the biblical text's representation of paradise as simultaneously immanent and transcendent, both separate and (through the four rivers) connected with the inhabited world.⁵⁶ David Dawson rightly notes, "The difference between moving through the letter to the spirit and replacing the letter by the spirit remains fundamental."⁵⁷

Non-realism or radical allegory was not an available hermeneutical option; as Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350–428) puts it in a comment on Galatians 4.24,

Some people, however, make everything into its opposite, wanting the entire account (*historia*) of Holy Scripture to be no different from nightly dreams. When they turn to expounding divine Scripture "spiritually" – "spiritual interpretation" is what they would like their folly to be called – they say Adam is not Adam, paradise is not paradise, the serpent is not the serpent. To these people I should say that if they distort *historia*, they will have no *historia* left.⁵⁸

Medieval *mappae mundi* continued to reflect a biblical world view shared with ancient Jews and Christians. Such maps are pictorial representations interweaving time and space, visualizing places as combinations of historical and cultural location, and intending to indicate *topological* contiguity rather than bare geometric scale.⁵⁹ This is a principle fully reflected, for example, in the fourth-century rediscovery of the Holy Land's

⁵⁵ This latter point is admittedly more difficult to demonstrate specifically with a view to Eden, but may be said to find confirmation with such phenomena as the Christian adoption of the Jewish identification of the four rivers. At least in the case of a writer like Jerome, there is perhaps also evidence of his specific awareness of Jewish interpretative traditions represented in sources like the biblical translations of Symmachus and Aquila: see e.g. his *Hebrew Questions on Genesis* 2.8–15 (ed. Hayward 1995, 31, 107–09).

⁵⁶ So also Scafi 2006, 242.

⁵⁷ Dawson 1992, 119 (cf. 73–126); I owe this quote to my student David Lincicum.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Swete 1880, 2.74–75: "isti uero omnia e contrario faciunt, omnem de diuina scriptura historiam somniorum nocturnorum nihil differre uolentes; nec enim Adam, Adam esse dicunt, quando maxime eos de diuina scriptura "spiritualiter" enarrare acciderit – spiritalem etiam interpretationem suam | uolunt uocari desipientiam – neque paradysum, paradysum, neque colubrum, colubrum esse dicentes. Ad quos uolebam illud dicere, ut historiam interpretantes, ultra non habuerint historiam."

⁵⁹ On the relevance of the principle of topological mapping (most famously instantiated in the London Underground map), see also Scafi 2006, 87.

theologically salient geography as reflected in Eusebius' *Onomasticon* and in the reports of Christian and eventually Jewish pilgrims in late antiquity and the Middle Ages.⁶⁰ Paradise belonged just as firmly at the boundary of the Judaeo-Christian mental map as Jerusalem belonged at its center. It has been argued that the Christian custom of facing East for prayer may have to do with the location of paradise.⁶¹

Jews and Christians in antiquity knew perfectly well that God is not literally a gardener, that he does not literally walk his shady groves in the cool of an evening. But unlike their pagan contemporaries, they also believed that the place of creation must be the place of redemption. For them, God's future world touches ours even now. Their maps chart the topography of redemption within the topography of creation. Both the memory and the hope of the Scriptural paradise attach for them to a place that is in important ways like our own, in a land contiguous with ours, a place on earth. The seemingly utopian in fact undergirds and verifies the world we inhabit.⁶² What the faithful rightly hope for here is indeed what they may expect to find there; what they fear and suffer will be recognizably vanquished and transformed.⁶³ The mainstream of Rabbis and Church Fathers agreed that the shape of redemption is undoubtedly *more* than that; and thus on most accounts a this-worldly, mappable Eden could not possibly contain the promised bigger reality of a new heaven and a new earth, wherever or however that might concretely take shape. But it was also clear that God's garden could certainly mean no *less* than that. To adapt an illustration Augustine liked to use of the eschatological imagination: there must surely be strawberries in paradise.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Cf. e.g. Scafi 2006, 84–95 and *passim*; also Jacobs 2007. Among pilgrims' reports, note e.g. Egeria, the pilgrim of Bordeaux, and on the Jewish side cf. the twelfth-century R. Petachia of Regensburg and the fourteenth-century immigrant physician Estori ha-Parchi.

⁶¹ So Louth 1995, 715 on Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. Myst.* 1.9 and Basil of Caesarea *Spir.* 27.66, also citing Podossinov 1991, 274 for numerous additional references.

⁶² Thus, rightly, Stordalen 2008, 49, also citing the influential work of Smith 1978.

⁶³ Jacobs 2007 notes the power of the idea "that paradise belongs to the world that we recognize as our own, that perfection was found in the same continuum of space that we know in all its brokenness. To map paradise is to feed grief for what has been lost and hope for what may be restored."

⁶⁴ "When we were boys, born and brought up in a landlocked region, we could already form some idea of the sea, after we had seen water even in a small cup; but the flavor of strawberries and of cherries could in no wise enter our conceptions before we tasted these fruits in Italy." Augustine, *Ep.* 7.3.6 (PL 33.70). On the religious significance of strawberries generally cf. further Bockmuehl 1991.

*Epilogue: a heaven on earth**Alessandro Scafi*

A celebrated sage of the first century, Rabban Gamaliel, taught his students that in the world to come, “trees will give fruit every day.” The Babylonian Talmud relates that one of Gamaliel’s students scoffed at him, saying, “But it is written, ‘There is nothing new under the sun.’” The Rabbi did not throw the arrogant student out. Instead he replied, “Come, and I will show you an example in this world.” He went outside with the students, and showed them a caper bush. Indeed, during its lengthy flowering season between April and October, the caper produces new flowers every day. Here was something on earth which anticipated the dimension of eternity.¹

Faced with the challenge of decoding the meaning and explaining the characteristics of the original perfect location described in the Book of Genesis – the earthly paradise – as a garden with trees and rivers, late-antique Jewish and Christian exegetes had to speculate about heaven and earth, letter and allegory, time and eternity. Their task involved discussing polarities such as soul and body, spirit and matter, and speculating on what on earth could anticipate the dimension of eternity. Was the Genesis account to be taken literally or did the sacred text point to a deeper layer of meaning? Was Adam’s paradise a real park somewhere on earth or a heavenly reality? Was the Garden of Eden to be regarded as a state fixed in eternity or as a condition inserted into the flux of history? Where was it? And when was it?

The late-antique debate offered a wide range of answers to these and other questions. The essays contained in this volume demonstrate how those early discussions contributed to the formation of the various elements that would finally come together in the medieval Christian idea of a paradise on earth and its Renaissance and modern manifestations.

¹ *b. Shabbat* 30b. I am grateful to Catherine Delano-Smith, Christopher Ligota, and Jemma Street for having read drafts of this paper, and to Mark Geller and Hanna Vorholt for helping me with bibliographical references.

As Guy G. Stroumsa notes in his introduction, both the Fathers of the Church and the Rabbis of the Talmud struggled to establish some kind of orthodoxy within their religious traditions. Ideas on paradise were not firmly settled, and the biblical narrative led Jewish and early Christian theologians to oscillate between different notions in a fluid process of interpretation. Maren R. Niehoff explains how Philo of Alexandria, for example, sought a new synthesis of literal scholarship and allegorical readings. Richard Bauckham notes that, in a number of early Jewish texts, Eden was sometimes identified with heaven and at other times distinguished from it. Eden's location was always conceived of as inaccessible, but it was variously placed in the lower heavens or at the very edge of the earth, and was sometimes thought of as the dwelling place of the righteous after their resurrection. And in this connection Martin Goodman explores Jewish ideas about an afterlife in the garden of paradise, and Simon Gathercole surveys early Christian texts describing the human soul's heavenly ascent to paradise after death. The complexity of the Jewish and Christian notions of paradise arises from the fact that the idea of a place of delight symbolizing perfection and happiness not only represented nostalgia for the past, but was also seen as a blessing for the present and a promise for the future. The expressions "paradise," "Eden" or "garden of God" were also associated in the Bible with descriptions of the Promised Land, the epoch of messianic salvation and the destination of the righteous in the life to come. As Galit Hasan-Rokem reminds us in her essay, some late-antique Rabbis saw the gift of human offspring and the pleasure of sexuality as a compensation to Adam and his progeny, following the introduction of death and the expulsion from paradise as a punishment for his sin. And yet, after the expulsion, the tree of life could still be seen as available, as Menahem Kister tells us from early Jewish and Christian sources: for Jews, it was the Torah; for Christians, the new tree of life was the Crucified Christ.

In late antiquity, Jewish and Christian exegetes were faced with the task of integrating the many pieces of the complex Scriptural "mosaic." In addition to the description of Eden found in the Book of Genesis, other passages of Scripture became involved. "Paradise," the Greek term used in the Septuagint for the Garden of Eden, recurs in the New Testament, as Grant MacAskill points out. Christians read in the Gospel of Luke that Jesus promised paradise to one of the two thieves crucified with him (23.43). Moreover, St. Paul claims that a visionary flight to the "third heaven" had carried him into paradise (2 Corinthians 12.4), and in the Book of Revelation, Christians are promised as a reward for faithfulness

a place called “the paradise of God” (Revelation 2.7). For Christian exegetes, Adam’s paradise prefigured spiritual realities such as the heaven of the end of time, the Church, and the individual soul.² The biblical description of Adam in Eden also prompted lively discussion about the existence of a primordial and natural law in paradise (as expounded in Sabrina Inowlocki’s essay) and the original language spoken in paradise (a topic explored by Yonatan Moss). There were also pagan conceptions of a blessed abode or a perfect golden age that challenged the world view of Jewish and Christian exegetes. Augustine’s approach, for example, to Virgil, Cicero, and Plato, is analyzed by Gillian Clark.

In the early centuries of Christianity, the Garden of Eden, the spiritual paradises of the soul and of the Church, and the celestial paradise that was mankind’s final destiny, were often confused or conflated. The foundation for the Church’s teaching throughout the Middle Ages, however, was laid in the fifth century by Augustine of Hippo. As Markus Bockmuehl points out in the final essay, Augustine developed the allegorical interpretation of the garden (seen as a representation both of Adam’s spiritual happiness and of human psychological reality, but also as an image of the life of the blessed and of the Church) while at the same time stressing the absolute necessity of believing in paradise as a real place and in the historical truth of the story of the Fall. This led to a clear distinction between the corporeal paradise of Adam and the heavenly paradise of the saints.³ As Emile Perreau-Saussine explains in the penultimate essay, Augustine’s vision of a heavenly city of God also implied a heaven both outside time and ever

² See, for example, Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram libri duodecim*, 1.1, ed. Joseph Zycha, CSEL xxviii/1 (Prague-Vienna-Leipzig: F. Tempsky-G. Freytag, 1894), 1.1, p. 3; *Biblia Latina cum Glossa ordinaria*, facsimile of the *editio princeps*... (Strasbourg: Adolph Rusch 1480/81), ed. Margaret T. Gibson and Karlfried Fröhlich, 2 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992), sig. a2v; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, ed. Pietro Caramello, Leonine edition, 3 vols. (Turin-Rome: Marietti, 1948–50), 1, q.1, a.10, p. 9; Nicholas of Lyre, *Postilla super totam Bibliam*, “Prologus secundus,” in *Biblia sacra cum glossa ordinaria*, ed. Leander de Sancto Martino, J. Gallebart et al. (Douai-Antwerp: Baltazar Bellerus-Ioannes Keerbergius, 1617), 1, sig. +4r C-E; see also Alastair J. Minnis, A. Brian Scott, eds., *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100–c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition* (Oxford-New York: Clarendon Press-Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 203.; Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l’Écriture*, 4 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1959–64), 1, pp. 190–98; Jean Daniélou, “Terre et paradis chez les Pères de l’Église,” *Éranos-Jahrbuch*, 23, 1953, pp. 433–72; H. S. Benjamins, “Paradisiacal Life: The Story of Paradise in the Early Church” and Christoph Auffarth, “Paradise Now – But for the Wall Between: Some Remarks on Paradise in the Middle Ages,” in Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, ed., *Paradise Interpreted: Interpretations of Biblical Paradise: Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden-Boston, MA: Brill, 1999), pp. 153–79.

³ Augustine, *De Genesi ad litteram*, viii.1 (1894), p. 229; see also Reinhold R. Grimm, *Paradisus coelestis, paradisus terrestris: Zur Auslegungsgeschichte des Paradieses im Abendland bis um 1200* (Munich: Fink, 1977), pp. 61–62.

present, a paradoxical “absent presence” that had an important impact on medieval political ideas.

Once accepted, Augustine’s combination of an allegorical and a literal reading of the paradise narrative in Genesis became a legitimate exegetical strategy in the Latin West. A long phase, from the fifth century until about 1200, witnessed the further elaboration of Augustine’s views through a complicated process of reception; for the puzzling features of the paradise narrative continued to challenge theologians and exegetes. The opposition of two models of paradise – a heavenly or spiritual condition on the one hand, an earthly, corporeal location on the other – was reformulated, and the Garden of Eden was isolated from the ultimate celestial bliss and the subtleties of spiritual allegory to be settled firmly on earth.

After Augustine, the fact that Adam and Eve had lived in a region on earth before the Fall was accepted as beyond question. Both Isidore and Bede were followers of the Augustinian view of paradise.⁴ The *Glossa* and Peter Lombard’s *Sentences* confirmed Augustine’s teaching that Adam had a body and that paradise was a real garden.⁵ However, the concept of a paradise on earth involved problems and tensions that remained unresolved. Broadly speaking, it may be said that once the divine garden had been located on earth, difficulties arose as to how to explain its intermediate character. The debate about paradise was destined to shift, as it were, from heaven to earth: after the difference between the terrestrial and the celestial paradise was established, the focus switched to the opposite problem of distinguishing Eden from earth. The questions asked were no longer whether the garden of Adam and Eve was a corporeal place or an allegory for spiritual and celestial realities, or whether our first parents were after all corporeal human beings or godlike angels; Scripture and tradition asserted categorically that the Garden of Eden existed on earth and was the dwelling place of a human couple. What continued to trouble were issues such as the location of Eden and how it was possible for our first parents, made of flesh and blood, to be eternal. These problems had preoccupied those who wrote on the earthly paradise for many centuries. Between the middle of the twelfth and the end of the thirteenth century, however, when a

⁴ Isidore, *Etymologiae*, xiv.3.2–4, ed. Wallace Martin Lindsay, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911); Bede, *Libri quatuor in principium Genesis usque ad nativitatem Isaac et electionem Ismahelis adnotationum*, I.1.1; I.1.31–2.1; I.2.4–9, ed. Charles W. Jones, *CCSL CXVIII* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1967), pp. 3, 32, 39–46; see also Grimm, *Paradisus* (1977), pp. 73–77 and 80–82.

⁵ *Biblia latina cum Glossa ordinaria* (1480/1481; 1992), I, p. 21; Peter Lombard, *Sententiae in iv libris distinctae*, II. d. 12, ed. Ignatius C. Brady, 3rd edn., 2 vols. (Grottaferrata, Rome: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae Ad Claras Aquas, 1971), I, pp. 384–89.

complex system of thought based on Greek science and Aristotelian philosophy, transmitted by Arabic and Jewish thinkers, was introduced into the West, these questions were posed and answered with greater clarity and more intellectually rich arguments. The new science and philosophy challenged the traditional Christian notion of an earthly paradise, since exegetes and theologians had to reconcile the biblical account of Eden with newly acquired geographical knowledge and improved understanding of the physical constitution of the human body. The biblical narrative had for centuries resisted the allegorical and Platonizing philosophical speculations that tended to blur the distinction between the Garden of Eden and heaven. Now the literalness of the account had been questioned by the new Aristotelian science: if on earth, then precisely where was the place? Thomas Aquinas wanted to demonstrate that there was a “natural fit” between the science of his day and mainstream Christian beliefs, including the idea of a paradise on earth and of an intermediate state of perfection enjoyed by Adam and Eve in Eden.⁶ Such a synthesis of natural philosophy and theology, however, provided neither a stable nor a long-lasting solution to the problem of the earthly paradise. Any effort to make rational sense of the mystery of the Garden of Eden contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction. Once the divine region of Eden had been distinguished from heaven, the attempt to locate it on earth involved a wide range of paradoxes and problems. So too, did the project of explaining the perfection of the first humans in scientific terms, once it had been established that they were not godlike or angelic creatures. The very act of examining a sacred geography and a mythical state of being with scientific tools – the great undertaking of the thirteenth century – was bound to produce dissatisfaction, which duly emerged in the fourteenth century. The passionate search for a rational explanation of paradise on the natural level in the thirteenth century resulted, in the fourteenth century, in the acknowledgement that such an attempt to unite human reason and revealed truth was ultimately destined to fail.⁷

The fifteenth century inherited various problems left unresolved by the medieval debate surrounding the geography and the topography of the terrestrial paradise: its whereabouts and the height of the mountain on which it was located, if, indeed, it was so located. In the previous century, John

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, q. 102, a. 1–2, ed. Pietro Caramello, Leonine edn., 3 vols. (Turin-Rome: Marietti, 1948–50), 1 (1950), pp. 483–85.

⁷ I discuss the history of the notion of the earthly paradise in the Western tradition in *Mapping Paradise: A History of Heaven on Earth* (London-Chicago: British Library-University of Chicago Press, 2006). For the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries, see esp. pp. 170–98; 258–61.

Duns Scotus had been aware of these issues but had reached the conclusion that there was no need for biblical exegetes to validate the description of Eden found in Scripture with empirical proofs or rational demonstrations.⁸ The discussion which developed in the fifteenth century confirmed the awkwardness of establishing a consistent geographical account of the location of the Garden of Eden.

Fifteenth-century geographical and theological debates about the Garden of Eden failed to unravel the mystery of paradise. Both humanist writers and learned theologians concluded that it was impossible to discover its location through scientific enquiry and that its existence had to be accepted on faith and on the authority of revelation. This outcome confirmed the fourteenth-century tendency to separate a purely religious sphere of belief from the realm of natural science. Contrasting theories had been formulated regarding the altitude of Eden and how it had escaped the Flood, but without any resolution. Likewise, no final agreement had emerged on the whereabouts of paradise, only conflicting suppositions. Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, for example, confined his speculations about the geography of Eden to a work of fiction, the *Somnium*, and did not include the description of paradise in his scientific treatise on geography, the *Cosmographia* (he left both works unfinished).⁹ Moreover, either through explicitly accepting Duns Scotus' anthropology, as in the case of Gabriel Biel, or through summing up the late medieval debate on the condition of Adam and Eve in the Garden, as Dionysius the Carthusian had done, theologians came to the view that man's condition was in itself imperfect, regardless of the Fall.¹⁰ The notion of an intermediate state of

⁸ John Duns Scotus, *Quaestiones in librum II Sententiarum*, d 17 q 2, in *Opera omnia* (1639), vi/1, pp. 788–90; see also Edward D. O'Connor, "The Scientific Character of Theology According to Scotus," in *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scoti*, Acta Congressus Scotistici Internationalis Oxonii et Edimburgi, 11–17 September 1966, 4 vols. (Rome: Cura Commissionis Scotisticae, 1968), III, pp. 3–50; Efrem Bettoni, "The Originality of the Scotistic Synthesis," in Bernardine M. Bonansea and John K. Ryan, eds., *John Duns Scotus: 1265–1965* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1965), p. 36.

⁹ Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, *Opera inedita*, ed. by Giuseppe Cugnoni (Rome: Salviucci, 1883; repr. Farnborough: Gregg, 1968), pp. 234–99. See also Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *Dialogo su un sogno. Dialogus de somnio quodam*, ed. Alessandro Scafi (Turin: Aragno: 2004); Alessandro Scafi, "Nel mondo dei sogni: Enea Silvio Piccolomini e l'uso letterario delle teorie oniriche tardo-medievali," in *Pio II Piccolomini: Il papa del Rinascimento a Siena*, ed. Fabrizio Nevola (Siena: Protagon and Comune di Siena, 2009), pp. 227–44; "Un Senese in Paradiso: Il viaggio letterario di Enea Silvio Piccolomini nell'aldilà di Dante e Virgilio," in *Conferenze su Pio II di Luca D'Ascia, Arnod Esch, Alessandro Scafi, Francesco Ricci nel sesto centenario della nascita di Enea Silvio Piccolomini (1405–2005)*, ed. Enzo Mecacci (Siena: Accademia degli Intronati, 2006), pp. 67–108.

¹⁰ Gabriel Biel, *Collectorium circa quattuor libros Sententiarum*, ed. Wilfridus Werbeck and Udo Hofmann, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1973–92), II, 17 q. 2; 20; d. 16, q. unica; s. 2, q. unica; d. 23, q. unica, a. 3; d. 24, q. unica; d. 28, q. unica, pp. 403, 405–06, 425–34, 466–79, 527–45. See also

human perfection on earth was gradually played down and replaced by a renewed tendency to transfer the perfect human condition to heaven. This attitude was similar to the allegorizing interpretations of the early Church Fathers, even though fifteenth-century theologians did not always describe the gulf between Creator and creation in Neo-Platonic terms.

Within the field of scholastic theology, the idea of human perfection had gradually shifted away from earth and back to heaven. Paralleling this movement, the increasing importance of Neo-Platonism in the fifteenth century promoted a revival of the purely allegorical tradition of biblical exegesis.¹¹ An important example of this tendency can be found in the works of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, who interpreted the Garden of Eden in Neo-Platonic and Cabalistic terms, conceiving of it as a divine state of perfection in opposition to the lowest world of materiality. The interpretation of the Garden of Eden and of the condition of Adam put forward in the Christian Cabala of the Renaissance may be regarded as a revival of the Origenist and allegorical tradition of biblical exegesis. Working within a syncretist framework and in the new humanist cultural context, Pico considered the Garden of Eden to be an image of angelic perfection rather than an original human state of perfection in an earthly garden. When Pico interpreted paradise in a Platonic manner, he envisaged it as the angelic mind, a garden where the trees are the ideas planted by God and the four rivers are philosophical virtues.¹² In his Christian Cabalist interpretation, on the other hand, paradise is described as a stage in the process of divine emanation, whereby the four rivers of the Garden of Eden correspond with particular channels of divine energy as described in Jewish mystical tradition and known as the *Sefiroth*.¹³ Pico's Cabalist view of Adam is that of a being of godlike beauty, not yet embodied in the flesh. Although his vision involves the notion of the unity of the universe and a close association between matter and spirit,¹⁴ we do not find in his writings any idea of a material paradise on earth, in the manner of Thomas

Heiko Obermann, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*, 2nd edn. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), pp. 62–68; Dionysius the Carthusian, *In librum II Sententiarum*, d. 17, q. 4–5, in *Opera omnia*, xxii, p. 142–57; *Enarratio in Genesim*, I, a. 14, in *Opera omnia*, I, p. 53.

¹¹ For the importance of Neo-Platonism in the fifteenth century, see James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1990).

¹² Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Commento sopra una canzone d'amore*, ed. Paolo De Angelis (Palermo: Novecento, 1994), pp. 25, 48, 62–74, 102–03.

¹³ Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Conclusiones nongentae: le novecento tesi dell'anno 1486*, ed. Albano Biondi (Florence: Olschki, 1995), p. 56.

¹⁴ See Fernand Roulier, *Jean Pic de la Mirandole (1463–1494): Humaniste, philosophe et théologien* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1989), pp. 330–34.

Aquinas and the orthodox medieval interpretation. For Pico, nothing connected to matter and belonging to the sublunary world could be perfect. Thus, Pico's view of paradise, while containing novel Cabalist elements, nonetheless returns to an earlier tradition of exegesis, which goes back to Philo and Origen.¹⁵

The fifteenth century undoubtedly represents a turning point in the history of the notion of an earthly paradise; for in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the belief in a real and still extant Eden on earth disappeared. From 1500 onwards the general tendency of exegetes – with some exceptions, of course – was to conceptualize of the Garden of Eden as no longer part of the present world. The question of Eden's precise location on earth began to be treated as a purely historical problem: paradise retreated to its origins. In the seventeenth century the debate on the location of Eden was definitively focused on the past, as for example in Pierre-Daniel Huet's *Traité de la situation du paradis terrestre* (1691).¹⁶

At first glance, it would seem that in the fifteenth century speculations on Eden represented a return to Origen and Philo and the debate in the Renaissance only meant a return to the late-antique Jewish and Christian debate, sanctioning the final victory of the spiritual or allegorical interpretation of the paradise narrative in Genesis, as already postulated in late antiquity. But, in fact, the Renaissance outcome of the debate on the earthly paradise described in the Book of Genesis involved a crucial paradigm shift rather than a return to earlier ideas. This is most evident when the main originality of the medieval vision of the Garden of Eden is taken into account, namely its temporal dimension, a feature that had been absent from the late-antique debate.

For medieval thinkers, geographical space could not exist without time and the Garden of Eden was seen not simply as a place but as an event/place. It was considered as a localized occurrence essential to human history, pinpointing the original sin of Adam and Eve as having occurred at a given time in a given place. Paradise belonged to both the earth and to the past. In the twelfth century, for example, the theologian and exegete Hugh of Saint Victor taught that God's plan for mankind had unfolded, and was

¹⁵ It is worth noting that Pico defended Origen's opinion on the pre-existence of the soul against the charge of heresy, maintaining that in Origen's time the doctrine was not yet firmly established: Henri Crouzel, *Une controverse sur Origène à la Renaissance: Jean Pic de la Mirandole et Pierre Garcia* (Paris: Vrin, 1977), pp. 41 and 130–39; Max Schär, *Das Nachleben des Origenes im Zeitalter des Humanismus* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1979), pp. 126–43.

¹⁶ Pierre-Daniel Huet, *Traité de la situation du Paradis Terrestre* (Paris: Jean Anisson, 1691). On the Renaissance turning point in the history of the notion of the earthly paradise see chapters 9 and 10 of my *Mapping Paradise*.

still unfolding, through time and space. According to Hugh, a spatially ordered sequence of historical events followed a preordained transfer of human imperial power and cultural excellence. The sequence ran from east to west. History had begun in the extreme east of the world, where God had put Adam into an earthly paradise, and the historical center of gravity (comprising the most important events, as defined according to a global perspective) moved progressively westwards, following the sun's daily course. History was proceeding from the Orient to the Occident, from Adam to Christ, from the early kingdoms in the eastern regions to the Roman Empire, towards its culmination in the Passion of Christ in Jerusalem.¹⁷ Paradise was located on the eastern edge of Asia, to mark the beginning of time and space, at the very boundary of history and geography as there could be nothing on earth beyond a place that was both in the remotest past and the extreme east. The Garden of Eden was at the dawn of time and at the sunrise of space. The Garden of Eden meant both the event, the Fall of Adam at the beginning of history, and the place, the region of the earth in the furthest east. Paradise belonged to history but it continued to exist, despite remaining inaccessible from the inhabited earth.

By the fifteenth century the historico-geographical comprehensiveness of the medieval notion of paradise had been gradually reduced to the purely geographical dimension, with an emphasis on contemporary geography, and paradise had become a purely spatial notion. The medieval idea that the Garden of Eden belonged to the present world was then abandoned and instead of a paradise vaguely located in the east, Renaissance scholars identified with modern precision the earthly location where, in the remote past, the earthly paradise had once existed. During the Middle Ages, the Garden of Eden was located in an inaccessible and eastern "nowhere," but also distanced in the past, in the world before the Fall, on a quite different plane from the contemporary human realm. Around 1500, the idea that paradise existed in the past was taken in a more explicit and more exclusive way. The new exegetical solution was that paradise had once been on earth, but had disappeared after the Flood.¹⁸

¹⁷ Hugh of Saint Victor, *De archa Noe*, IV.9, ed. Patrice Sicard, CCCM CLXXVI (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 111–12. See also my *Mapping Paradise*, pp. 125–28.

¹⁸ The first exegete to advocate that the Garden of Eden had disappeared was Augustinus Steuchus, head of the Vatican Library, *Recognitio Veteris Testamenti ad hebraicam veritatem* (Venice: Aldus, 1529), fols 22v–24r, but it was Martin Luther who insisted that paradise had completely vanished: Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1–5*, in *Luther's Works*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan (St Louis: Concordia, 1958), I, p. 88; *Genesisvorlesung*, ed. Gustav Koffmane and Otto Reichert, in *D. Martin Luthers Werke*, XLII (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1911), p. 67. The idea was taken up by subsequent thinkers, including John Calvin.

Late-antique ideas of paradise, however, continued to shape the post-Renaissance and modern notion of a paradise lost from the face of the earth. The tendency to elevate Eden from the realm of geography into a spiritual dimension and to consider all the elements of the paradise narrative in Genesis as merely figurative expressions and as an allegory of deeper realities, for example, still appeared in the debate about Eden after the Renaissance. The emphasis in John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) was on the individual's search for an inner paradise and the ultimate, celestial paradise, and the poet here anticipated later theological arguments.¹⁹ Mainstream Christian churches and most Christian theologians also today prefer to stress the symbolic meaning of the paradise narrative in Genesis, even when they accept its historical validity. As the theologian Balthasar Rhau put it at the end of the seventeenth century, only ruins of the Garden of Eden could be found in Mesopotamia and this was why it was much better to search for the spiritual paradise available to man within the human soul, the Church, and in heaven.²⁰

Eden came to be identified with heaven and the afterlife on several occasions in the modern exegetical debate, as it had sometimes been in late antiquity. The Renaissance claim that paradise had once comprised the whole earth (an idea put forward in the sixteenth century by thinkers such as Joachim Van Watt, Jan Van Gorp, Ludovicus Fidelis, Ludovico Nogarola, and Juan de Pineda)²¹ and the vision of a vanished perfect world that was no longer to be found presented a striking similarity to the late-antique allegorical exegesis of the paradise narrative. Philo, for instance, had thought of paradise as the whole universe.²² The positing of paradise

¹⁹ See Joseph E. Duncan, *Milton's Earthly Paradise* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1972), especially pp. 15–18, 29–37, 115–87, 220–68; Helen Wilcox, "Milton and Genesis: Interpretation as Persuasion," in Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, ed., *Paradise Interpreted: Interpretations of Biblical Paradise: Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 1999), pp. 197–208.

²⁰ Balthasar Rhau, *Disputatio geographica de Paradiso Terrestri* (Frankfurt an der Oder: Johannes Coepselius, 1696), pp. 47–49.

²¹ Jan van Gorp (Goropius Becanus), *Origines Antwerpianae, sive Cimmericorum Becceselana novem libros complexa* (Antwerp: Ex officina Christophori Plantini, 1569), pp. 481–82, 495–98; Juan de Pineda, *Los treynta libros de la Monarchia ecclesiastica o Historia universal del mundo*, 1.1, 5 vols. (Barcelona: Hieronymo Margarit, 1620), 1, pp. 16–18, 28–29; Ludovicus Fidelis, *De mundi structura* (Paris: [n.p.], 1556), p. 294; Vadianus (Joachim Van Watt), *Pomponii Melae de orbis situ libri tres* (Paris: Apud Christianum Wechelum, 1540), sig. U2; Vadianus, *Epitome trium terrae partium, Asiae, Africae et Europae compendiarum locorum descriptionem* (Zurich: apud Christophorum Frosch, 1534), p. 192; Ludovico Nogarola, *Dialogus qui inscribitur Timotheus, sive de Nilo* (Venice: Apud V. Valgrysium 1552), pp. 20–21. See also Joseph Duncan, "Paradise as the Whole Earth," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 30 (1969), pp. 171–86; Duncan, *Milton's Earthly Paradise* (1972), pp. 199–202.

²² Philo, *De plantatione*, II.111, [Works], Loeb Classical Library, trans. Francis H. Colson and George H. Whitaker, 10 vols. and 2 supplementary vols. (London: Heinemann; New York: Putnam's Sons, 1926–62), III (1930), pp. 235–37.

in Mesopotamia, a common solution adopted by a number of post-Renaissance thinkers, also evoked the late-antique idea of an enclosed garden and the ancient connection between gardens and kings, a feature even more striking in nineteenth-century Assyriologists' speculations about a Babylonian Garden of Eden.²³

The Christian interpretation of the Garden of Eden as a prefiguration of Christian realities also continued well beyond the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Locating Eden in the Holy Land, for example (an idea promoted by scholars such as Jacques d'Auzoles Lapeyre, Iohannes Herbinus, and Jean Hardouin in the seventeenth century), bears witness to the long-standing Christian tendency to associate Adam and Christ, the land of Eden and the land of Crucifixion.²⁴ Other issues that were discussed in late antiquity were destined to last in the Western debate about the Garden of Eden, such as the problem of the language originally spoken in paradise, the relationship between the original perfection and human sexuality, and the ongoing interest in locating on earth the (now vanished) Garden of Eden.

In 1961 Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space, declared on his return that he had not encountered God during his flight. Scientists and politicians continue to advocate further exploration of the "final frontier" as essential for the fulfillment of human potential, without ever seriously considering the possibility of finding the Creator there. Nonetheless, countless people persist in worshipping a Father who is somewhere up there in heaven. A great tradition lies behind these two impulses, one reaching towards heaven, the other towards the heavens, which are understood to be roughly in the same direction. A great tradition lies behind our curiosity, perhaps unacknowledged, as to whether we can actually come into contact with a place known to us only through the Bible. Long before Gagarin, however, the biblical Garden of Eden had been conceived of as not only remote in space but also distanced back in time. The past, however, may sometimes anticipate the future. As Rabban Gamaliel had taught his students, somewhere and somehow, there is something on earth which anticipates the dimension of eternity.

²³ See my *Mapping Paradise*, pp. 270–77, 291–317, 347–51.

²⁴ *Mapping Paradise*, pp. 322–34.

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